

About the Author

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Currently the president of the Albert Ellis Institute in New York, Dr. Ellis is the founder of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), the first of the Cognitive Behavior Therapies.

Ranked 'one of the most influential psychologists of all time' by American and Canadian psychologists, Dr. Ellis has written or edited more than seventy-five books, published more than eight-hundred scientific papers and articles, and created over two-hundred audio cassettes. His widely-regarded books include *How to Live with a 'Neurotic; The Art and Science of Love; How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable about Anything—Yes, Anything; Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy; Relational Emotive Behavior Therapy: It Works for Me—It Can Work for You; Feeling Better, Getting Better, and Staying Better; The Road to Tolerance and the Myth of Self Esteem;* as well as *Is Objectivism a Religion*--the original version of this book.

Since earning his doctoral degree in psychology from Columbia University, Dr. Ellis has served as chief psychologist for the state of New Jersey, and held an adjunct professorship at Rutgers University.

He was president of the Division of Consulting Psychology for The American Psychological Association, as well as for the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality. Dr. Ellis is recognized as a Diplomat in clinical psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology. He has received numerous awards, from the American Psychological Association, the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy, and the American Counseling Association.

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Introduction

When I first read *The Fountainhead* in the early 1940's I thought there was something compelling about the philosophy of Ayn Rand--or what is now called objectivism. Not that I didn't have misgivings; I did. Her romanticism is out of this world; and her worship of capitalism is not my cup of economics. But her individualistic outlook made some real sense to me; and it influenced me somewhat as I developed my method of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT).

As the years went by, I still favored many of the elements in objectivism and was an interested observer of the growth of the Nathaniel Branden Institute, which promulgated the objectivist philosophy. I corresponded with and then met Nathaniel Branden several times, starting in the late 1950's, and I always felt friendly toward him. We collaborated once in combating the puritanical views

of Adela Rogers St. Johns, a popular novelist, when all three of us appeared together on the Kup's Show on television in Chicago.

I later endorsed Branden's application for membership in the American Psychological Association since I felt that he had an excellent grasp of the theories of psychotherapy. On his side, he referred several clients to me over the years and also used as referral sources some of my associates in the Albert Ellis Institute, who practice REBT in the United States and abroad.

Naturally, during our discussions, Branden and I had differences! Although I was not as well versed in the principles of objectivism as I am today, I felt that it espoused reason in an absolutistic, unscientific manner. He said I was too moderate in my use of reason in psychotherapy and that I should never have changed the name of my method from 'rational' to 'rational emotive behavior therapy,' because the latter was a watered-down use of rationality. So we quietly continued to disagree over the years, even when some of my associates became objectivists, and some objectivists became devoted to REBT. We tried to see whether the gaps between the two systems could be bridged.

When the two philosophic approaches to life became synonymous for some, I suggested to Nathaniel Branden that Ayn Rand and I have a public debate on rational emotive behavior therapy

(REBT) versus objectivist psychology. I thought this would differentiate between the two systems and to show our listeners exactly where we agreed and disagreed on the philosophy of objectivism. Rand refused to debate me, but Branden agreed to engage in such a debate; so it was arranged.

In preparing for the debate, I read all the available salient material on objectivism, and I began to see that my impression was confirmed: Although objectivism had many superficial resemblances to REBT, it actually consisted of a radically different outlook on human existence. In fact, I was appalled by its degree of absolutism and anti-empiricism--not to mention anti-rationality! I did my best to make this clear in my presentation during the debate.

Unfortunately, the time limitations of a debate and the form in which our presentations had to be made precluded my doing a comprehensive job of stating all my objections to objectivism. I knew, then, that I wanted to do so in book-length form. This later became the book, *Is Objectivism a Religion?*, which was originally published in 1968.

With this newly updated edition, I shall attempt to show, (as I did briefly in my debate with Branden,) that any resemblance between Ayn Rand's objectivism and a truly rational approach to human existence is purely coincidental; that her objectivist teachings are

unrealistic, dogmatic, and fanatically religious; that unless they are greatly modified in their tone and their content they are likely to create more harm than good for the believer in their way of life; and that they result in a system of psychotherapy that is inefficient and unhelpful.

Why bother? Why, instead of taking the time and energy to examine the tenets of objectivism, shouldn't I relax with a good book or cultivate my own REBT garden? For several reasons:

1. Ayn Rand's objectivism is still one of the most powerful forces for "rationality" and "atheism" in America and the world. Although Branden and The Nathaniel Branden Institute's ties were severed by Ayn Rand in 1968, Rand's works, and particularly her novels, *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, continue to sell millions of copies every year. They are especially influential on young people and sway thousands of intelligent and potentially rational people every year into believing an irrational and dogmatic religious point of view. What is worse, perhaps, is that Rand leads these readers into deluding themselves that they are being sensible and empirical; Ultimately standing in the way of their achieving solid reasonableness.

2. Since her economic, philosophical, and political beliefs are extreme and fanatical, it is easy to see that they would be dangerous to implement. Unfortunately, this is just what some republicans,

libertarians, and the current chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan (friend, acolyte of, and co-author with Rand,) are actively working to accomplish: The dismantling of government economic and social programs in the U.S., and the world. I believe that would be disastrous for many, harmful to most, and lead to world economic stagnation. Objectivists are, in effect, Social Darwinists who would impose massive suffering and death on the world's poor and working class in pursuit of their fantasies. Libertarianism is largely the same as objectivism except that the libertarians are even more deluded than objectivists: libertarians are essentially anarchists who believe in no government at all. Since the capitalism espoused by libertarians, (*The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, etc.) is the extreme, religious capitalism of Rand, I have include them for they all are a threat to the sanity and economic prosperity in the world today. For the sake of brevity, I use only the term "objectivism" in this text to largely cover all three: objectivism, libertarianism, and lassie-faire capitalism.

3. Rand splits and sabotages the movement for rationality-- which is always much too feeble in our suggestible and unthinking times. The voice of reason, as Sigmund Freud once said, is weak but persistent. True! It tends to become smaller and less persistent when a religious-minded fanatic like Rand confuses the issue, and, in the

guise of rationality, vigorously preaches a decidedly non-rational outlook. The proponents of rationality, therefore, preferably should question such fanatics.

4. Rand's philosophy, if one dispenses with its theological premises, has some excellent points to make about human behavior. These points tend to become muddled when subsumed under the heading of its objectivism. Someone had better separate the wheat from the shaft.

5. Extremist views, if carefully criticized, may possibly be modified by their own adherents and followers. Freudianism, for example, is now becoming much less Freudian and much more sensible, largely because of the consistent attacks that have been made on it during the past fifty years by various non-Freudians, such as Adler (1927), Jung (1954), Horney (1964), Wolpe (1961), and me (Ellis, 1950, 1958, 1962, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2005). Although it is not likely that Randians will tone down their unscientific extremism as a result, it is possible that latter-day neo-objectivists will be more flexible in this respect.

Publication of this revised edition of my book, *Is Objectivism a Religion?* Coincides with the 60th anniversary of *The Fountainhead's* publication. Perhaps, a forthright analysis here of what is rational and

what is devout and irrational in Rand's philosophy will move a segment of her following toward greater rationality in the twenty-first century.

6. By examining in detail the objectivist position on human nature, behavior, and individuality and social change, I will simultaneously be analyzing and thinking about the weaknesses and strengths of my own REBT position on these aspects of human living. I thereby am able to correct my errors, develop my philosophy of life and of psychotherapy, and arrive at more effective theories and practices.

As a result of my 1968 debate with Nathaniel Branden, and some later encounters with him when he still largely followed Ayn Rand, I am able to better help my clients, and can demonstrate more effectively to some of them why their negative attitudes toward themselves are invalid. Before I finish working on this book, I expect to reap several similar kinds of benefits in my theorizing and my practical work with the many people I see professionally.

7. Frankly, I enjoy polemics. Pitting my thinking against that of other bright people is challenging and rewarding. I trust that I do not like this kind of thing for so-called egotistical reasons: to knock my opponents down and impress others with what a "worthwhile" person I am. But I do enjoy a good, no-holds-barred discussion. I think that

people such as Ayn Rand and the Nathaniel Branden are worthy, enjoyable opponents. So let's zestfully get on to the fray!

Chapter 1

Some Seeming Rationalities of Ayn Rand's Objectivist Philosophy

On the surface, Ayn Rand makes excellent points about humans and their potential for rational behavior. Unfortunately, she postulates on individual and social psychology in such an extremist, fanatical, dogmatic, high-flown moralistic and irrational manner as to destroy much of its sense and effectiveness. Let us consider, in this chapter, some of her sanest views, to see how they can be carried to absurd conclusions.

Cognition and emotion. In agreement with the theory of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) and with several other modern psychological views (such as Magda Arnold and George Kelly), Rand holds that emotions do not exist in themselves but are largely created by mental processes. She states that individuals *interpret* the things they perceive and hear and generate their emotions--including their disturbed emotions from these interpretations. Following Rand's objectivist psychology, Branden states that mental health is "the capacity for unobstructed cognitive functioning--and the exercise of

this capacity.” (1967). This is not only an ideal concept of mental health, but is also an unrealistic goal.

In REBT, the goals of minimum anxiety, depression, and hostility are sought; and clients are taught to work toward these goals by becoming cognitively, emotionally, *and* behaviorally efficient. The therapists have an ideal concept of how they would like to see the client function. Even if a single human never attains this ideal--as it may never be—the ideal itself can help therapists and their clients to work to achieve it. The key is, the achievement of this goal need not be *expected* or *demanding* for then clients tend to be disillusioned when it is not reached, and become anxious or depressed by not doing as well as they supposedly *must*.

Setting up the concept of mental health as an optimum goal is one thing; but believing in this concept as an empirical statement is quite another. Branden talks about the “mentally healthy person as...a man whose cognitive contact with reality is unbreached, whose perceptions, judgments and evaluations are free of blocks and distortions,” (1967). He, like Rand, believes that such individuals *can* exist today, and that all they need to make them have cognitive contact with unbreached reality is intensive objectivist training.

This belief is unrealistic because (1) it is improbable that anyone with *unobstructed* cognitive functioning will *ever* exist and still be what

we know as a *human*; (2) if such persons exist, it is most implausible that they are alive today; and (3) if such people exist, it is likely that they would also have some biological tendencies toward unusual rationality. (4) Rand herself was seriously depressed for the last 25 years of her life. If the *summa cum laude* of objectivist psychology fails to find happiness using it, how can anyone else?

Branden and Rand say that such people *do* exist today and that they *must* have perceptions, judgments, and evaluations “which are free of blocks and distortions.” What luck! This unreasonable expectation will tend to block and distort the thinking of those who hold it because it will make them anxious about *not* possessing the superb perceptions and judgments that they supposedly *must* have.

Emotions and values. Objectivist psychology states that “emotion is a *value response* and is the automatic psychological result of man’s valuing judgments,” (Branden, 1965a). Unhealthy emotions therefore proceed from “inadequate or disturbed thinking” (Branden, 1967a).

This theory of emotion has much to commend it. I first noted that emotions stem from cognitive evaluations or judgments in the 1950’s. In the paper, “An Operational Reformulation of Some of the Basic Principles of Psychoanalysis” (1956), I wrote: “An individual *emotes* when he evaluates something strongly--when he clearly

perceives it as being 'good' or 'bad,' 'beneficial' or 'harmful,' and strongly responds to it in a negative or positive manner." I later discovered that Magda Arnold and several other psychologists and philosophers had independently arrived at this same conclusion.

Rand, after making a good start in its theory of emotion, goes on to state that people's emotional mechanism is like an electronic computer, which their mind has to program with the values his mind chooses (Rand, 1961a). The implication here is that *all* emotion is *purely* of cerebral origin; and that the emoting individual has full volitional control over his emotional reactions. This is untrue for several reasons:

1. Some emotions, such as sexual ecstasy or disgust over certain foods, seem to be inextricably linked up with, or biased by, various physical sensations and are only moderately instigated by cognitions. They are somatic-psychic as well as psycho-somatic in origin; and sometimes they are more the former than the latter.

2. Cognition itself is inevitably correlated with and is importantly influenced by bodily sensations and motor responses. A heterosexual man desires a woman because he *thinks* he is attractive; but he also may *think* her attractive, and even loves her, because he receives great physical pleasure from having sex relations with her.

The wish--or desire or satisfaction--as the old saying goes, is father to the thought; *and* the thought is also father to the wish.

3. Although a person has much more ability to control her emotion through her thinking process than she often thinks she has, her ability in this regard is hardly limitless. Once her emotional process is, for any reason whatever, forcefully under way, all the thinking in the world may not enable her to control it--at least not for the moment. And once her physical sensations are greatly aroused, she will tend to think and emote in certain ways, no matter what is her general philosophy of life.

Regardless of the fact that cognition itself (and its product, reason) are biased and restricted by our limited powers of perceiving, emoting, and acting. *Because* we are fallible humans *all* our behaving abilities--including sensing, perceiving, thinking, emoting, and acting--are imperfect and restricted. The virtually perfect, one-to-one relationship between our thought and emotions that Rand and Branden posit is practically nonexistent. Consequently, if they wish to remain unchallenged, their position had better be modified. An emotion *tends to* arise from a value-response. It *usually* is something of an automatic psychological result of our value judgments. It has, however, other important causative factors connected with human sensing, perceiving, and acting.

Volition or free will. One of the best aspects of Rand's objectivism is its theory of volition. Like rational emotive behavior therapy, it emphasizes that people have some choice or free will in their acceptance or rejection of parental and other social influences. Ayn Rand states that the choice to think, or not, is volitional. When people are predominantly negative, they choose "a self-made cognitive malnutrition," (1967b) that leads to an impoverished, anxiety-ridden inner life.

Even children, Branden aptly points out, have *some* choice in being influenced by or conditioned by their environment and do not *have* to be completely affected by it, (1967a). Although most children are highly suggestible to their parents' teachings, quite a few are not. However, having stated this fact, Rand and Branden characteristically louse it up with silly allegations and implications. Their main theory of volition--as we shall see later in more detail--implies that people are *perfectly* able, especially during adulthood, to make healthy and rational choices in their conduct. Rand then holds that when they refuse to choose sanely or to think clearly for themselves, they are reprehensible *persons* who *deserve* to be punished. Note that she does not merely believe that, if people choose to think poorly, they will *in all probability* bring on unpleasant consequences. Yes, most probably. It is quite questionable that anyone chooses not to think

well. More probably, it is an error in thinking that causes their emotions, and sways them to choose not to think. They may not think about important things or use bad judgment. It is a non-sequitor to surmise that they perceive a clear choice and choose to think poorly. Moreover, behaviorism has shown that people can change if they understand what is happening and work at changing. But Rand moralistically condemns the *person* who does not “volitionally” think well and she attempts to put them into a kind of objectivist hell. She thereby becomes theological rather than empirical.

After stating, however, that people need not make themselves anxious as long as they hold rational values, Rand contradicts herself and contends that they must lose self-esteem and become anxious if they volitionally refuse to think, if they perform poorly, and if they do not continue to ceaselessly grow as a person. (See a detailed discussion of this point in the following chapter.)

Rand also sets up her own theological premises, her own dogmatic *shoulds*, *oughts*, and *musts*, that will probably cause people as much emotional disturbance, if they adhere to them, as any of the other absolutistic and not falsifiable constructs about themselves that they are likely to hold. Although I recognize that a person’s values can make them needlessly disturbed, Rand believes that they *must* hold certain unqualified values about reason and reality that will

inevitably cause them trouble. Rand does little to disabuse individuals of their unrealistic value systems by which they seriously disturb themselves. Instead, she frequently tries to get them to adopt *more* irrational and dogmatic assumptions. It seems likely that this is why she herself suffered with depression for the last 25 years of her life.

Self-interest. Ostensibly, Rand--like REBT and several other systems of philosophy--espouses enlightened self-interest as an aspect of ethics and mental health. Thus, she states that just as life is an end in itself, humans are ends in themselves, not means to the ends or the welfare of others (1964). Therefore, people must live for their own sake, neither sacrificing themselves to others, nor sacrificing others to themselves. This kind of living for one's own sake and achieving one's own happiness, is, Rand dogmatically states, man and woman's "highest moral purpose."

Rand, moreover, *defines* selfishness and sacrifice in tautological, unempirical terms as absolute values and disvalues. A sacrifice, states Rand "is the surrender of a value," (1957). If you sacrifice money, comfort, or time, you have not made a *real* sacrifice, as long as you do not simultaneously sacrifice one of your basic values. Thus, if you give your only bottle of milk to your starving child, you are not making a sacrifice, because you very much *value* your child. But if you give the milk to your neighbor's child, whom you don't value too much, and let

your own child die, then you are truly sacrificing high value for lower value and making a *real* sacrifice. Note that besides being an absurd, silly extreme example of something no mother would do, sacrifice and selfishness are defined as Rand prejudicially *thinks* they should be defined; and are not standard dictionary usage. Several objections can be made about Rand's *definition* of sacrifice:

1. The Randian definition infers if you give a bottle of milk to a starving child, you are doing so because your *value system* says that this is a good thing to do; therefore you do not sacrifice any value in giving it. But your value system could also tell you to sacrifice your own child to God (who will then presumably love you), to cut off your leg so that you will win the approval of the physically impaired, (which you may value highly), and to give money to a "worthless" stranger, because you think that you will then be a "good" person yourself.

Your value system could induce you to make just about any kind of sacrifice, including the sacrifice of your life so that others will think you noble. To say that therefore you are not *really* making any sacrifice is either to demonstrate (a) that practically all sacrifices are actually justifiable; or (b) that virtually no sacrifices involve the giving up of your values, and therefore there are not really any sacrifices. Ayn Rand's notion that, if you give milk to your neighbor's child and let your own die, it *is* a sacrifice is invalidated because you must have had

some reason--or value--for making this decision; hence, not having sacrificed a value, you made no sacrifice at all.

2. What Rand really seems to mean is that there are some "good" and "sensible" choices and some "bad" and "foolish" ones. She uses sacrifice in a pejorative sense to differentiate between choices she likes and dislikes.

3. By any reasonable definition, the term *sacrifice* means the giving up of *anything*--money, time, physical comfort, or anything else--for either (a) something else of lesser value or (b) no return whatever. Moreover, unless the thing you give up has some *value* to you, your "sacrifice" is unimportant or meaningless. The Webster's New World dictionary, in fact, defines *sacrifice* as "a giving up, destroying, permitting injury to, or foregoing of some valued thing for the sake of something of greater value or having a more pressing claim." Rand differentiates between some *things* or *desires*, which she does *not* call *values* (even though they are obviously valued by the individual) and some *basic philosophic premise about yourself and the world*, which she *does* call a *value*. This distinction is arbitrary.

What is worse, if your basic philosophic premise happens to differ from hers--if, for example, you consider a stranger "worthwhile" and she considers him or her "worthless," or if you consider money more important than a friend--she - thinks your values are wrong and

that you are making a terrible sacrifice! She is therefore arbitrary in regarding what your values really *are* and what she thinks they *should be*. With that kind of highly definitional thinking, she is bound to call any of your actions that she dislikes a "sacrifice" and any action that she happens to approve a function of your "selfishness or enlightened self-interest."

4. Where definite sacrifice seems to exist, and the sacrificing individual is lauded for being unselfish, Rand and Branden refuse to admit that any sacrifice has actually taken place and pretend that it has not. Thus, Branden states: If, in an issue where no self-sacrifice is involved, you help another human in an emergency, and do so out of good will and regard for the value of a human life, you cannot equate your action with the policy of a man who believes that to serve others is the purpose of her or his existence, that he has no right to live otherwise, that anyone's suffering takes first claim on him, (1967).

Some obvious objections here are:

a. Where *is* any man who believes that to serve others is the purpose of his existence, that he has no right to live otherwise, and that anyone's suffering takes first claim on him? Perhaps a few "saints" in human history have held this extremely altruistic view; but has anyone else?

b. If you are on your way to meet your friend and you stop to help a fellow human in an emergency, knowing that you will miss your enjoyable date, you may do so out of good will and regard for the value of a human life. But--let's face facts!--you are obviously making a sacrifice, out of your regard for the value of a human life; and it seems to me silly to deny it. The fact that you gain *some* value by making this sacrifice (which you do in making almost *any* sacrifice) does not guarantee that you are being at least *partly* self-sacrificing or altruistic. And the fact that you are not *as* self-sacrificial as someone who thinks that to serve others is the purpose of his existence, does not negate the sacrifice.

It is incredible, in this regard, that Rand and Branden keep insisting that *no* sacrifice is involved when you gain what they call *value* for your sacrifice. They seem to be incredibly dense here; or they are so bent on being *the* outstanding upholders of the philosophy of selfishness that they simply refuse to admit that *any* degree of altruism is legitimate, even when they indicate (as does Branden in his above statement) that one kind of sacrifice is hardly the same as another.

5. The unusually tautological nature of the objectivist concept of selfishness and self-sacrifice is indicated in the following passage from Branden's essay, "Benevolence versus Altruism" (1962). He

states that if you found an abandoned baby on the street and helped it, you normally would not do so out of altruistic duty but out of loyalty to the value of living and to the potential that the baby represents. If the baby represented an evil person like Hitler, you would not bother to save it. Your *motive* for saving the baby would be the *value* you place on it. Therefore you would not be thoroughly altruistic in saving it. Obvious objections to this statement include:

a. Branden correctly points out that altruism does not consist of *any* help to others but does consist of help backed by a certain *motive*. Motive, as the dictionary defines it, is *unselfish* concern for the welfare of others. Branden implies that helping the baby or accident victim is selfish, since it is done "out of loyalty to the value of living entities and to the human potential that the baby or the accident victim represents."

But, by this standard, *all* human acts are selfish, including so-called altruistic acts, since they are presumably done out of loyalty to the value of living entities and to the human potential that the recipients of the altruism represent. Even "altruistic duty" is performed out of loyalty to the value of (1) the altruist, who thinks that he should be self-sacrificing, of (2) the receiver, whom the altruist thinks should be helped, and of (3) God or fate, whom the altruist

thinks requires him or her to perform this kind of duty. True self-sacrifice, by this kind of definition, seems to be nonexistent.

b. Branden states that one would be immoral (and presumably unselfish) to jump into the water to save a drowning Hitler, because he was a mass-murderer. But even if the mass-murder charge against him is valid, Hitler still could be perceived as a human being, who has value just because he is (during his lifetime) a living entity and possesses *some* human potential. Therefore, by Branden's definition, one would be quite selfish, and presumably sane, to save Hitler.

c. If, as Branden states, self-sacrifice really is "the sacrifice of some higher value of one's own," it is difficult to see how anyone except a madman would engage in this kind of behavior. Those who consider it their "altruistic duty" to make sacrifices obviously consider such a duty *higher* in value than what they sacrifice for it. They may be wrong; but they still think, and are entitled to think, that certain values, such as altruistic duty, are higher than certain other values, such as selfishly caring for one's own desires.

Ayn Rand and the hardcore objectivists who back her are determined to define selfishness and sacrifice in their own way and ignore the customary usage of these terms. Where it might well be shown that it is *desirable* for most humans, most of the time, to be

relatively self-interested, they put their own interests *first* and those of others a close *second*, Rand claims that all of us should be *utterly* selfish.

When the chips are down and Rand's definition of "selfishness" is questionable, we see that she belies her own words or else espouses a highly modified form of self-interest that cannot be easily distinguished from that upheld by many non-Randians.

6. Some of Rand's avowals seem to contradict her extreme views on selfishness. As her hero in *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt, cries, "We are on strike against self-immolation. We are on strike against the creed of unearned rewards and unrewarded duties." I surmise that if he were *truly* selfish, he would hardly quibble about whether his earthly rewards were earned or unearned. He might inveigh against unrewarded duties--since they would not be particularly in his self-interest, but why should he complain about inheriting a million dollars, or living as an economic parasite off others, or being catered to by someone for whom he doesn't really care?

Ayn Rand's deification of the virtues of capitalism trick her into denouncing unearned rewards--as if all rewards garnered by capitalists are truly earned! But in taking this stand, which may be somewhat consistent within the framework of "free enterprise," she forgets that a truly self-interested individual would hardly quibble about whether her

or his rewards in life were earned or unearned--as long as s/he did not subsequently defeat his/her own ends by gaining such rewards.

If it could be unequivocally shown that all people who gained unearned rewards sabotage the general social, political, and economic system under which they live, and thereby, in some *final* analysis, defeat their own happiness, they might sanely choose not to take any such rewards. They would be upholding their *ultimate* self-interests. But it is doubtful that *all* unearned rewards (such as those received when people care for you more than you care for them) are socially (and individually) sabotaging, as Rand claims that they are. Consequently, people who, without guilt, accept unearned rewards may be truly self-interested, while people who refuse them or accept them with guilt may actually be masochistic.

7. The Randian argument for selfishness is taken to such extremes that, if it actually were carried out, few (if any) of us would survive. First of all, most of us are weak, sick, and in need of help for long periods of our lives. We are necessarily dependent on others during our childhood; and frequently, also, in our old age. Millions of us, in addition, are at times physically disabled seriously neurotic, psychotic, or otherwise ineffective and incompetent. Some of us, of course, have relatives and friends who truly love us and who *want* to

aid us when we are in need. But what about those who don't? Are they to be left to live painfully or to perish?

Rand has her supposedly rational hero, John Galt, exclaim, "I swear that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine." What, *never*? Maybe the fictional John Galt could happily abide by this unswerving philosophy; but are there many *real* humans who could? And what would happen to us weaker ones if all of us stronger ones rigidly held John Galt's view?

Again, Branden firmly supports Rand by proclaiming, "Altruism is the antithesis of love, just as it is the antithesis of *any* positive value in human relationships," (1962). If Randians cannot see that altruism, although questionable when it is taken to extremes, is still a distinct kind of loving and that it has *some* positive relationship values, they reduce life to blacks and whites, with no grays whatever--the essence of their outlook on human existence. If they would only read Alfred Korzybski, they might modify this all-or-nothing outlook. Perhaps!

Ironically, the Randian position on selfishness leaves little room for the survival of the fittest. When John Galt discovers that he is to be arrested, he tells his beloved, Dagny if they also put her on a torture rack and force him to see her being tortured, he would immediately kill himself. His act of suicide, he says, would *not* be one of self-sacrifice, because he would find it so painful to see Dagny

tortured that he would have no values to seek after that. Since he would not care to exist without values, his killing himself would not be a sacrifice but a good, selfish condition.

What Galt seems to be saying here is that (a) if he can't have Dagny happy, he thinks that *his own* life isn't worth living; that (b) if he has to obey others, even temporarily, he again doesn't think that his life is worthwhile; that (c) if one or two of his cherished values, such as life with Dagny and freedom from authority, are taken away from him, there will be absolutely *no* possible good he can seek afterwards; that (d) he doesn't mind killing himself so much as he minds seeing Dagny witness his drawn-out murder and being tortured herself.

Now this, for a presumed dyed-in-the-wool selfish individual, seems most odd! For how childish can one be if one believes that he absolutely cannot be happy unless his girlfriend is; that he just *can't bear* obeying others, even temporarily; that *no* good values can exist for him if he can't have the *main* ones he wants; and that he'd rather kill himself than have his girlfriend suffer by witnessing his murder? Only the last of these views seems to be mature: because, if one really thinks one is going to die anyway, perhaps it would be better to kill oneself quickly than to die in a drawn-out way and have one's girlfriend witness one's death. But I get the impression that Galt

would rather die than have Dagny watch him being tortured even if he knew that the torture itself was not going to kill him.

If you really hold Rand's impeccably "strong" and "selfish" philosophy of life, you actually make yourself so fragile that you may well be driven to kill yourself. For frequently others will boss you around, forced to observe your loved ones suffer mentally, and be deprived of some of your greatest wishes. And if you allow deprivation to drive you to suicide, how much can you be truly self-interested and determined to live happily no matter *how* rough is your life? Rand makes Galt strong enough to kill himself before he allows Dagny to suffer. But he is, by our usual standards, *unselfish* in doing so, despite Rand's denials.

Ironically, then, Rand's vaunted upholding of heroic selfishness will apparently, if rigorously followed, make for neither the survival of the fittest nor the weakest. In addition, it will cause virtually all those who do survive to feel inordinately guilty about how "self-sacrificing" they really are. If, for any reason, they choose to sacrifice themselves for another person, they will at least be a *bit* altruistic--as Rand absolutely forbids them to be. How criminal! It is difficult to imagine who will benefit if this extreme Randian view of human selfishness prevails; Maybe the jackals and the worms.

Individualism. Objectivism has to be given credit for upholding a strong brand of individualism. Its social, political, economic, and psychological tenets distinctly favor the individual, tend to be against over-conformity, and violently oppose deadening forms of collectivism and coercion. Thus, Branden insists that all persons are the owner of their own life, and because they are an end in themselves and exist for their own sake, others cannot command their minds, (1965b). Ayn Rand has written: "The smallest minority on earth is the individual," (1964). Therefore, she holds, if you deny individual rights you cannot say that you are upholding minority rights.

To be an individual, however, you usually have to be able to accept, relate to, and work reasonably well with members of the social group in which you reside. As I have noted for many years, we don't choose to be a member of a social group or community when we are young children, but later, we definitely *choose* to live with other people rather than to become a hermit, (1963). Of course, we can always choose to be irresponsible and to live in our community and stubbornly refuse to follow its main rules of conduct. But usually that will get you in trouble, be against your best interests, partially destroy your community, and again sabotage your own interests.

Self-interest, which Rand fanatically espouses, normally includes a good deal of social interest; and as shown by many thinkers--such

as Alfred Adler, Martin Buber, Erich Fromm, and Carl Rogers--requires concomitant social interest. This is especially true today, when modern and ever-advancing technology allows terrorists and suicide bombers to kill and maim hundreds of people and to encourage views, which may destroy millions. As it has been succinctly said, we had better all hang together, else we may well hang separately.

Because of our real danger, and because we can see--as Ayn Rand failed to see--that enlightened self-interest integrally involves and includes enlightened social interest, REBT espouses and frequently teaches its clients--and anyone else who it reaches--unconditional other-acceptance, (UOA). This important aspect of mental health and well-being is almost the opposite of Rand's espousal of the philosophy of extreme selfishness. I will further explain unconditional other-acceptance in this chapter.

I began to encourage my clients to work hard to achieve unconditional self-acceptance (USA) and unconditional other-acceptance (UOA) in 1953, when I read Paul Tillich's newly published book, *The Courage To Be*. Tillich was a theologian and an existentialist, and followed the philosophy of Jesus, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, and several other leading thinkers. He was also a teacher of Carl Rogers and a friend of Rollo May, who adapted some of his philosophy.

Along with Rogers, I agreed that people were born and raised to accept themselves conditionally and thereby have "good" feelings of "self-esteem"--which actually helped them to be disturbed. As I explain in detail in the next chapter, self-esteem is perhaps the worst cognitive-emotional problem afflicting men and women. It essentially says--as Rand and Branden have kept declaiming--"When I behave well and achieve the sincere approval of significant other people, I *am* a good person, a success, a worthwhile individual, a winner. But when I behave incompetently and badly and lose the approval of significant others, I *am* a bad person, a loser, a worthless individual, a no-good-nik." As Alfred Korzybski pointed out before Tillich, self-esteem or conditional self-acceptance constitutes the *is* of identity, "I *am* what I do," and is a quite erroneous, "insane," overgeneralization.

After reading *The Courage to Be*, when I had already discarded most psychoanalytical thinking and was in the process of developing REBT, I began to encourage my clients to adopt three important philosophies: unconditional other-acceptance (UOA), unconditional self-acceptance (USA), and unconditional life-acceptance (ULA).

I had read Rand's *The Fountainhead*, and found that it made some good points, but that it was quite romantic, unscientific, and non-accepting of human fallibility. So when Roger Callahan, Lee Shulman, urged me and then Branden himself, to read *Atlas*

Shrugged, The Art of Selfishness, and Rand's other writings on objectivism in the 1950's and 1960's, I eagerly did so. By 1955, I had already started to practice and teach REBT; so I met Roger's, Lee's, and Nathan's dogmatic Randism with much skepticism and a notable lack of enthusiasm..

I could see immediately, especially when Nathan graciously presented me with a copy of *Atlas Shrugged*, that it was even more authoritarian and absolutist than *The Fountainhead*. Howard Roark, for all his pouting childishness, at least crusaded for individual liberty and some degree of libertarianism. Not so John Galt! If ever I came across a bigoted and fascistic "hero," it certainly was he! With his creation, Ayn Rand had reached the summit of her pseudo-libertarian bigotry.

This was especially true of Rand's total non-acceptance and defamation of everyone--including even outstanding capitalists who had the chutzpah to disagree with any of her sacred positions. Off with their balls and their heads!

I would have been very happy to confront Rand personally and to have a spirited debate with her, but she knew, from descriptions of me and my views, I would hardly be a sycophant. So we never met. This was in keeping with what people told me about her talks at the Nathaniel Branden Institute. She often vigorously presented her

objectivist views there; but, as several students (including some of my clients) told me, she rarely allowed any discussion--especially dissenting discussion! I was disappointed about her refusal to see me personally. But, as you can see, I hardly died of it.

Back to my consideration of Rand's head-in-the-sand neglect of the obvious dualistic aspects of individualism and its inevitable alliances with sociality: Practically all humans, as I have said for many years in my writings, are individuals in their own right *and* are inevitably social creatures. They are invariably born into and reared by families and communities and rarely thereafter choose hermit-hood. In modern society, they raise little of the food they eat, nor manufacture the clothes they wear, nor build the homes in which they live. They are partly independent but also greatly dependent, whether Rand likes it or not!

In *The Fountainhead*, Rand insists that if people face their basic alternatives, they can survive in only one of two ways--by the independent work of their own minds or as parasites fed by the minds of others. This is patently untrue, since most people survive neither by thinking very independently nor being complete parasites on others. It might be great if they were more individualistic than parasitic; but *great* hardly means *necessary*.

Ayn Rand also tells us that collective thought doesn't really exist because when a group of people reaches an agreement, they only reach a compromise or an average drawn upon many individual thoughts. (1943). The facts are, of course, that many fine works of art, literature, industry, and law (including the Constitution of the United States, which Rand admires so much) are the product of collective thought and compromise. And much of the material that Randians themselves publish seems to be the result of collaborative effort and collective consultation among some of their leading theorists!

Anti-conformism. Rational emotive behavior therapy is outstanding among the schools of therapy for showing people that they do not *need* the love or approval of others, and that they'd better not care too much about what other people think of them if they are to accept themselves unconditionally. It teaches people that they don't *have to* conform to many of the ideas that are prevalent in their society if they want to be mentally healthy and happy.

Rand's psychology largely agrees with the REBT view, as noted by Branden (1965a,) that if people are to be cured of their neuroses, they must not *need* the approval of others. He points out that only anxiety will follow if they must have others' approval instead of self-esteem.

Here again, however, objectivism opposes conformity in a fanatical, over-determined, ad hominem and unreasonable manner. Branden's statement that *only* anxiety is possible to those who attempt to substitute the approval of others for self-esteem is clearly exaggerated: since even individuals who have a dire need for love and are disturbed when they are not "truly" loved have other feelings besides anxiety, even gaining comfort from their misguided quest.

Howard Roark, the hero of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, violently lambastes people, such as Peter Keating, who primarily seek others' approval, and calls them base "second-handers." He rants: "They have no concern for facts, ideas, work. They're concerned only with people." This is a straw man concept, which is hardly held by even the sickest of approval seekers.

Ayn Rand excoriates as social metaphysicians all who fear others' disapproval and notes that they regard the consciousness of other people as superior to their own and to the facts of reality, (1964.) The disapproval of others is so shatteringly terrifying that nothing can withstand its impact on their consciousness. They would deny the evidence of their own eyes and invalidate their own consciousness for the sake of any charlatan's moral sanction. Here, too, a cannon is used to kill an insect--and a very rare insect at that!

Psychotherapeutic implications. In regard to the practice of psychotherapy, objectivism has some sane things to say, particularly in its disagreements with classical Freudian positions. Like the REBT practitioner, the objectivist-oriented therapist spends little time in exploring clients' history, analyzing their dreams, always encouraging them to follow their "real" feelings, or giving them overweening love. Instead, REBT practitioner's therapists show clients that their disturbances stem from their 'musturbatory' assumptions and values. They question clients' insinuations, and try to persuade them to think flexibly and realistically.

Objectivism, too, contends that "the patient's most urgent psychotherapeutic requirement is psycho-epistemological retraining"--that is, education in how to think, how to think about herself, her problems and her life, how to recognize and correct the psycho-epistemological self-sabotaging practices by which she keeps harming herself. But in actual practice, objectivist psychotherapy is based on a narrow, rigid, absolutistic, and essentially religious system of ethics that reinforces several of the irrational assumptions that largely lead to the clients' disturbances; that which an REBT practitioner would try to induce a person to challenge and surrender. For example:

1. REBT vigorously contradicts clients' Irrational Beliefs (IBs) that they *must* be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving if

they are to have worth; and teaches them how to accept themselves unconditionally, whether or not they outstandingly achieve.

Objectivism teaches people that if they choose to be unthinking or unproductive--as, of course, practically every disturbed person does--they are worthless and *deserve* to suffer. It consequently helps make many individuals neurotic in the first place, and helps keep them disturbed in the second place, by implying that since they *are* essentially vermin, there is nothing they can do to help themselves change for the better.

2. REBT consistently attacks the Irrational Belief (IB) that millions of people rigidly hold that many people *are* bad, wicked, or villainous and that they should be severely blamed and punished for their villainy.

Objectivist psychology, oppositely, believes that anyone who (in its eyes) is irrational, mystical, or anti-capitalistic *should be* thoroughly castigated, and *should* suffer all kinds of agonies, including death. There is more villainy in Ayn Rand's novels than there is in some of the worst of old-fashioned potboilers. The total condemnation of human beings, or the casting of them into a hell-on-earth, is one of the most common things (as we shall see later in more detail) that objectivists do.

3. A truly rational therapist teaches clients to combat the Irrational Belief (IB) that it is *awful* and *catastrophic* when things are not the way they would like, or when governmental agencies or other institutions are improperly run. The objectivist spokesmen (as again we shall note in more detail later) are always predicting starvation, death, and complete social disorganization when someone thinks crookedly or acts badly; and this kind of dire prediction enhances instead of minimizes people's anxiety.

4. REBT counselors show clients that it will do them little good when they make themselves terribly upset over other people's problems and disturbances.

Objectivist writers, as well as the heroes whom Rand creates in her novels, continually fume and froth against others who act in a disturbed manner. Instead of mainly feeling sad and regretful when others act badly, or feeling healthily frustrated by their acts, objectivists are encouraged to feel disgusted, revolted, nauseated, shocked, indignant, depressed, and otherwise upset. What is worse, they wrongly believe that it is the reprehensible acts of others that upset them, rather than their own irrational and exaggerated *reactions* to these acts.

This is a contradiction to the objectivists' own theory of emotional upsetness--which, as was noted earlier in this chapter,

states that neurotic manifestations do not stem from the events that happen in the world but are “the *symptoms* and *consequences* of a mind’s malfunctioning” (Branden, 1967a). The followers of Ayn Rand avoid recognizing that becoming highly enraged and disgusted with other human beings, and denigrating their value as persons when their behavior is bad, is one of the most common neurotic symptoms.

5. One of the main irrational notions that REBT reveals and disputes with disturbed individuals is the idea that there is invariably a right, precise, and perfect solution to human problems and that it is catastrophic if this perfect solution is not found (Ellis, 1962a, 2001a, 2001b). But objectivism distinctly encourages perfectionism! Thus, Rand exhorts her readers, in *Atlas Shrugged* “to drive as far as your mind will take you, with achievement as your goal. Work is the purpose of your life, and you must speed past any killer who tries to stop you,” (1957).

In an essay in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964) entitled, oddly enough, “How Does One Lead a Rational Life in an Irrational Society?” Rand insists that “to pronounce moral judgment is an enormous responsibility.” To be a judge, you must possess an unimpeachable character.

In spite of Rand’s claiming that she doesn’t expect humans to be infallible, it is clear from statements such as these that she does

demand, if you are to accept yourself, that you must strive for mighty achievement, possess an unimpeachable character, and an unbreached integrity. If this kind of perfectionist *ought* does not *encourage* continuous anxiety and feelings of inadequacy in the individual who adopts such standards, I wonder what else will!

In several important respects, therefore, objectivist psychology espouses and propagates irrational ideas that will often help the person who subscribes to them from becoming emotionally disturbed. Objectivism ostensibly rebels against the conformism of our culture, which obviously helps many of our citizens to become neurotic. Yet, in the end, objectivism actually bolsters the obsessive-compulsive achievement demands of this very culture. On the one hand, people don't need to be loved by others in order to accept themselves. On the other hand, they *do* have to succeed in life and that they *do* have to think to the very best of their ability.

This is essentially a religious or theological notion and is an updated version of the Calvinist doctrine of 'salvation by works.' It makes people's self-acceptance conditional upon their doing something to *earn* their own respect (as well as that of others). It does not in the least accept the theory propounded by REBT and by existentialist psychology: namely, that people definitely can, and had better, fully

accept themselves, no matter how poor are their performances and no matter whom else in the world accepts them.

Chapter 2

Rand's Objectivist View of Self-Esteem

We have seen thus far that, although Ayn Rand's objectivism frequently starts off with a rational hypothesis about human behavior and the ways in which it can be improved, it invariably louses up this sensible beginning and winds up with an extremist, outlandish view of life that is neither true, nor constructive.

I shall now consider various other basic objectivist philosophies, many that are not particularly sane to begin with, and the bulk of which (if consistently followed) would lead to negative results. Since objectivism's view of self-esteem is central to most of its other attitudes toward human life, I shall consider this first.

Most psychological and psychotherapeutic systems are unclear about the problem of self-esteem, worth, and self-confidence, because they lump several ideas together under the one concept of "self-concept" or "self-respect." Let me, therefore, seek clarification in this regard.

The "self" is difficult to define because it has at least two aspects, which may overlap but are hardly the same. First, his or her

“self” is his/her entire organism: Everything he perceives thinks, feels, and does; second is his feelings about himself, self-image, self-concept, or self-regard. It is largely this second notion of the self that we talk about when we use terms like ego or self-esteem.

When the individual has a good self-image or a worthy concept of himself or herself, he usually possesses one, two, or three different kinds of confidence. The first of these is work-confidence, or achievement-confidence, as I referred to it in *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*, (1962). This means that he accepts himself because he thinks he is sufficiently capable, because he knows how to handle himself in the world, and because he thinks he has a sane attitude toward life. The second is love-confidence. This means that the individual respects himself because he knows that others approve him and that he has a good chance of winning and keeping their approval.

Usually, if a person has work-confidence and love-confidence, we say that he also has self-confidence. But this is not quite true. For self-confidence (or self-esteem, self-acceptance, or self-respect), when it truly exists, means that the individual fully accepts himself *whether or not* he thinks he is highly capable, and *whether or not* others approve him (Ellis, 1962, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003).

Objectivism, like most philosophies about the individual and the self, seem to have little conception of true self-confidence or self-

esteem--what Carl Rogers has called "unconditional positive regard." Instead, objectivism insists that the individual's acceptance of himself must be contingent on several other things, and therefore must be highly conditional. Here are some of the ways in which Rand's psychology posits a limited, false, and pernicious concept of self-esteem.

1. According to objectivism, "self-esteem...is the conviction that one is *competent* to live and *worthy* or living...." If a person were to think herself 'stupid' or 'insane,' she would regard this as a devastating reflection of her ability to deal with reality (Branden, 1967b). This is statistically true: Most humans *do* think of themselves as pretty worthless if they are not competent to take care of themselves, if they act stupidly, or neurotically.

The fact remains, however, that it is quite *possible* for a person to acknowledge that he is not able to take care of himself adequately and that he is more stupid or psychotic than others, and *still* accept himself as a worthy person. As long as he accepts the idea that just because he is human, because he is alive, and unique, he deserves to continue to exist and to be happy, he can unqualifiedly accept himself in spite of his questionable competence. In REBT, we call this unconditional self-acceptance (USA,) (Ellis & Harper, 1997).

2. Further, objectivist psychology holds that when a child or an adult “surrenders the expectation of achieving efficacy, he surrenders the possibility of achieving full self-esteem.” If he regards cognitive efficacy as an absolute, not to be surrendered or relinquished, he thereby activates a process of growth and development that continually makes him self-accepting, (Branden, 1967b). Here the empirical observation that it is *desirable* for a person to think and work efficiently is irrationally raised to the absolutistic notion that it is *utterly necessary* for him to be efficacious, and that the more ineffective he is the less he can value himself as a person. Obviously, if this is to be the standard of self-acceptance, only an exceptionally small number of humans could meet it--including, I would guess, a small number of dyed-in-the-wool objectivists! The rest of us poor mortals will be left with pretty low self-esteem.

Even Ayn Rand, Barbara Branden, and Nathaniel Branden indicate in Rand’s biography that Rand often became depressed when minor interruptions prevented her from working. (1989). Depression, almost invariably, is a reflection of an individual’s low estimation of him or herself, because the depressed individual often feels that (a) “Things are going badly in my life,” and (b) “I am too weak and inadequate to handle these things or make them better, and (c) therefore, I am an inadequate person.”

When the individual insists that, *because* he works hard, accomplishes something, is good at winning the love of others, or achieves anything else; he is a worthy individual, he tends to make himself depressed when one or more of these clauses, on which his self-esteem depends, are no longer true. If he follows the objectivist credo and places his self-worth on the balance scales of achievement, he tends to remain internally anxious and depressed even when his life is a fine model of productivity. For he will always have moments--or years--when his productivity subsides.

3. A person's moral worth, the objectivist position states, is not to be judged by his emotions and his rationality. Only the latter is directly in his volitional control, (Branden, 1966e). And again, from the same source: If a person proceeds to defy his reason and his conscious judgment, to follow his emotions blindly, he will have good grounds to condemn himself. Branden partially corrected this in his later writings by indicating that a person could base his self-esteem on having a good character. But then he would only have *conditional* self acceptance (CSA).

According to this dictum, only an individual who chooses to be highly rational is a good person; and anyone who knows that he is irrational or neurotic and does not immediately correct his false

judgments and disordered emotions should justifiably condemn himself.

Branden and Rand, as I point out in *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* (1962,) and *A Guide to Rational Living* (Ellis & Harper, 1997), put the disturbed person into an impossible bind. Objectivists say, the subject becomes neurotic in the first place largely because she condemns herself for her errors and her inappropriate behavior, (instead of more sanely acknowledging these errors, fully accepting herself with them and working to minimize them). Then, when she acts neurotically, she condemns herself for having symptoms, and concludes that such a worthless person can never change for the better. It is bad enough that people afflicted with poor judgment and neuroses tend to think this way, even without Rand and Branden stoutly encouraging them to continue this self-defeating, viciously circular kind of thinking!

4. In objectivism, every human being judges himself by *some* standard, and to the extent that he fails to satisfy that standard, his sense of personal worth, his self-respect, suffers accordingly (Branden, 1967b). Here again objectivism confuses the individual with his performances, and insists that because performances have to be rated and judged--which they have to be in order for the individual to

survive--the self, or the person as a whole, must be rated, evaluated, or judged.

Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), in conjunction with certain existentialist and humanist philosophies, maintains that although people have strong tendencies to rate or judge themselves, they do not *have to* do so, and in fact, act irrationally when they do (Ellis, 1962, 2002, 2003). Their 'self' or total personality is either a rather meaningless abstraction or overgeneralization; and even if it can be precisely defined, there seems to be no mathematically precise method of evaluating it, or of giving it a simple global rating, (Ellis & Harper, 1997, Ellis 2005; Korzybski, 1933).

In the last analysis, the self is invariably rated by some kind of arbitrary definition. You claim that you're good because you perform well, or because you are popular, or because God loves you, or simply because you exist. If you must rate yourself, then you'd better be sensible to pick some safe standard--such as the belief that you are good because you exist--rather than some anxiety-provoking standard--such as the belief that you are good because you perform well.

However, there is no *necessary* reason why you *have to* evaluate yourself at all. You could simply accept the fact that you exist and let it go at that. Thus, you could say: "I exist. Because I exist, I prefer

to stay alive; and while I am alive, I prefer to be happy. If performing well or inducing others to approve of me will bring me practical rewards and make me happier, then I shall try to be efficient and popular. But if I am neither efficient nor popular, I can still find *some* way of remaining alive and being happy, so I shall look for that way. As long as I can somehow remain alive and derive some amount of joy from living, I shall consider life worthwhile. If this no longer becomes true, and I think that I shall never find any happiness in life, I may then consider my life valueless and may kill myself.

“No matter how much or how little I consider living valuable, I do not have to rate myself in terms of any standard--since doing so is arbitrary and will very likely get me into unnecessary difficulties. In particular, it will tend to make me so anxious that I shall not live up to the arbitrary standard I have set. So why need I rate myself at all?” You can, in other words, fully accept your existence and the desirability of finding happiness and freedom from anxiety without giving yourself any rating whatever.

You don't have to rate, evaluate, or esteem your *self*. You can merely accept yourself--or, more accurately, accept the fact that you are alive and that there is a good likelihood that you can find *some* kind of enjoyment if you remain alive. This kind of unqualified self-acceptance is a far cry from the usual kind of self-rating that virtually

all humans do, and which almost invariably leads to conscious or underlying anxiety.

“People,” states Branden, “need self-respect because they have to achieve values and in order to act have to value the beneficiary of their values--namely, themselves,” (1967c). This may be largely true; but self-respect, or what I call self-acceptance--or the individual’s considering himself worthy of living and of enjoying himself is by no means the same thing as self-esteem, pride, or self-approval. The former relates only to your aliveness and your potentiality for happiness; while the latter relates to *proving* yourself worthy of being alive and happy--and proving this by performing well and by showing your superiority over others; so says objectivism!

Self-confidence, in other words, means valuing yourself under virtually *all* conditions, whereas self-esteem means valuing yourself only when you behave well--and especially when you put others down. It is interesting to note, in this instance, if you think you *must* have self-esteem--meaning, you must perform well in order to accept yourself--you will usually be so anxious about your *not* being competent that you will incessantly focus on *how* you are doing, instead of *what* you are doing, and will consequently be panicked, perform badly, and have little confidence in yourself.

As REBT notes, anyone who *must* have something or *must* do well will tend to be anxious about the possibility of *not* doing as well. An absolutistic *must* is itself anxiety-producing, even when--and perhaps especially when--it is applied to the idea, "I must have self-esteem." Objectivism, with its continual emphasis on *shoulds*, *oughts*, and *musts*, leaves the true believer in Rand's philosophy with practically no chance of attaining full, secure, self-acceptance.

5. According to objectivist thinking, constant growth is a *psychological* need. It is a condition of mental well-being, requiring people to possess a firm sense of control over reality, and existence. They need the conviction that they are *competent* to live; This requires the knowledge that the *methods* of dealing with reality, and *principles* by which one functions--are right. Self-esteem--the basic conviction that you are competent to live--can only be maintained so long as you are engaged in a process of growth, and remain committed to increasing your efficacy (Branden, 1964a).

Here Branden, Rand, and other objectivists outdo themselves! Not only, they contend, must a person be highly competent in order to deserve the right to live and be happy; but he must also be engaged in a process of continuous growth, must become ever-increasingly competent. Note, again, that objectivists do not say that constant growth and increased competency merely are *desirable* or *preferable*

traits. No, they contend that self-esteem can be maintained *only* if people possess these traits.

Rand and objectivists seem to completely ignore the fact that at least one-quarter of the people in the world today are too uneducated, and unsophisticated to be exceptionally competent, or to foster their own continuous growth. They also ignore the fact that perhaps another one-quarter of the populace--including those with psychosis and severe personality disorders--are sufficiently bright and educated to think intelligently in many areas of their lives but are still so disturbed, (and in many instances were probably born with a predisposition to be disturbed,) that they are lucky if they can hold their heads above water economically and socially, let alone behave at a high level of competence, then continue to grow to still higher levels of efficacy!

This may be objected to, by adherents of Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden, on the grounds that they are merely describing *ideal* conditions for human functioning. But does Branden sound like he is talking about an ideal or about an empirical reality?

An indication of how the objectivists themselves do not live up to their notions of self-esteem is given by Ayn Rand (1966a), who tells us that "during a question period at Nathaniel Branden Institute, a student asked: 'Can you tell me how to read the newspapers without

getting depressed?’ She replied: ‘When you find the answer, please let us know.’” According to this anecdote, even Rand was not able to ward off feelings of depression--which means, to my way of thinking, that she did not accept herself enough to accept the frustrations of reality, and the disapproval of others, to keep her un-depressed.

The idea that an individual is able to accept herself only because she possesses “a firm sense of control over reality” and is competent to live, to know that the principles by which she functions are absolutely right, and to keep constantly growing is a highly inelegant solution to the conception of worth that is expressed in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religion. For this religious view says, “I accept myself and consider myself worthy of life and enjoyment because I am performing well and growing constantly in the eyes of God.” The objectivists say, “I accept myself and consider myself worthy of life and enjoyment because I am performing well and growing constantly in the eyes of people and the (God-like) objectivists.” Where is the real difference between these views?

A more elegant approach to self-acceptance is found in the rational emotive behavioral view, which says, “I accept myself and consider myself worthy of life and enjoyment simply because I exist, because I am alive.” Or, “I fully accept myself by only rating the effectiveness of my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, but never rating

or evaluating my total *self* or being.” Both the Judeo-Christian-Islamic and objectivist views may be inelegant solutions because they require additional and unnecessary assumptions. Moreover, the Judeo-Christian-Islamic view boils down to the proposition that “Since ‘I am I’; since I am alive; and since I am able to invent and define the attributes of a God; I can therefore posit a God to whom I am acceptable, and thereby indirectly accept myself.” And the objectivist view boils down to the proposition that “Since ‘I am’ ;I since I am alive; and since I am able to invent a system of self-acceptance based on the proposition that I must be an ever-growing competent person, I can thereby indirectly accept myself.”

The Judeo-Christian-Islamic and objectivist conceptions of self-worth are true only by definition--because the individual decides to make them true for himself. They both stem from the basic assumption that since *I* am alive and since *I*, just by being alive deserve to be happy, I can invent definitions of my own worth, which will help me accept myself and be happier. They go needlessly beyond the original assumption and gratuitously add other assumptions--which, ironically, may in the end, interfere with self-acceptance and enjoyment.

For, if I believe in a God who, by accepting me enables me to accept myself, I allow the possibility that God will not accept me under

certain conditions--and I thereby limiting my self-acceptance. And if I invent an objectivist-type God (the absolute necessity that I be competent and ever-growing,) I again retain the possibility (indeed, the high probability,) that I will *not* be that competent, and I again greatly limit my self-acceptance. To dream up gratuitous requisites for self-acceptance is philosophically inelegant and pragmatically dangerous. Moreover, since humans are the kind of animal that easily make themselves anxious, to demand this as a prerequisite for self-acceptance, is risky.

Rational emotive behavior therapy (and other humanist therapies) prefer to stick with the simplest, most elegant, and least philosophically assailable assumption regarding human worth: Namely, I exist; I appear to have a good possibility of being happy if I continue to exist; therefore I deserve to exist, (or think it would be better to preserve my existence,) and strive to live happily by unconditionally accepting myself.

6. The fact that objectivists have a highly perfectionist and unrealistic conception of human worth is shown by their inevitable--somewhat compulsive--tendency to start with a fairly reasonable definition of self-acceptance and then quickly to bolster it up with grandiose ideals. Thus, Branden begins with the statement that "*self-esteem is the conviction that one is able to live and worthy of living*"

(1965a)--which is sensible enough, since by any reasonable and workable conception of self-worth the individual *is* worthy of living just because he is able to live; but Branden continues: "which means: that one's mind is competent to think and one's person is worthy of happiness." This implies that less competent individuals and those who can but do not think well are *not* worthy of happiness, even though they may somehow manage to achieve some degree of it.

To make matters worse, Branden adds: "Self-esteem is the result and reward of a mind fully committed to reason. This means commitment to the maintenance of a full intellectual focus, to the constant expansion of one's understanding and knowledge, to the principle that one's actions must be consistent with one's convictions, that one place any consideration above reality, that one must never permit oneself contradictions." (1965a)

Well! Here, objectivist psychology surpasses itself in its inordinate demands! Where it usually fails to make clear that certain goals of human behavior are *desirable* but not necessary, in this instance, it posits goals that are not even desirable: commitment to the maintenance of a *full* intellectual focus, the *constant* expansion of one's understanding and knowledge, and *never* permitting oneself contradictions. If people were truly as devoted to these goals as the

objectivists urge them to be, they would be compulsively rational--and therefore inhuman and irrational!

Branden states, not only are these goals desirable, but achievement is absolutely necessary if the individual is to like himself. So here he is taking traits of highly questionable desirability and insisting that they *must* be achieved for purposes of self-worth. He pyramids one irrational premise on top of another--once again showing that objectivism is not entirely a rational philosophic or psychological system. As I noted above, in his later writings, Branden adds that people must have *constant* expression of good character--else they are nothing.

7. The objectivist theory of human worth is internally inconsistent and contradictory. Thus, we are told that the individual is sufficient unto himself, his main goal in life is to be himself and not to worry about what others think of him, he should selfishly pursue his own interests, and "no one who values human life would preach that man has no right to exist for his own sake," (Branden, 1962). But then, in direct contradiction to these views, he and Rand preach that people have *no right* to exist for their own sake *unless* they work hard, think straight, maintain steady growth and development, and otherwise fulfill the tenets of the Calvinist-objectivist credo. If they construe existing for their own sake as being dependent on others,

they presumably have no right to *this* kind of self-determination and do not deserve to live, even if they can manage to survive and (perversely enough!) be happy with their anti-objectivist philosophy.

Objectivists contend that you can rid yourself of feelings of anxiety and worthlessness by choosing self-accepting values. But if you happen to choose--as I, for one, do--the value system that is least likely to cause you to feel emotionally insecure: Namely, the existentialist-humanist value system that postulates that you can fully accept yourself no matter *what* you do and no matter *how* badly you perform, objectivist psychology tells you that you are deliberately choosing (according to its biased standards,) to think unclearly and to be less competent than you could be, therefore, you *should* be anxious and self-hating.

Still again, objectivism holds that when you are insecure, you *volitionally* choose the kind of false thinking that creates your insecurity. It also states that *volitionally* crooked thinking *is* criminal, that you *deserve* to hate yourself when you make this choice, and you cannot possibly have self-esteem unless you have "an intransigent determination to think and act on [your] rational judgment" (Branden, 1965b). This means that, if you feel worthless and you accept the Randian postulate that you made yourself feel this way and *should not* have done so, *you will quite probably make yourself feel worthless for*

feeling worthless or make yourself anxious about being anxious--and will thereby make yourself still more emotionally disturbed. This is why; if objectivist views are strictly followed in the course of psychotherapy, they will tend to help the majority of clients feel more worthless and hopeless.

8. Like O. Hobart Mowrer and other religiously-oriented psychotherapists, Rand fails to distinguish properly between responsibility and sin. Those who make a mistake usually are responsible for their actions (because they have caused them,) and therefore can be held accountable for their errors. But "sinners" are generally held to be (a) responsible for their actions, (b) condemnable as people for performing them, and (c) deserving of punishment (either on earth or in hell) for committing them. Mowrer insists that a wrong-doer *is* a sinner and that therefore he had better admit his sinning, atone for it, and make absolutely certain that he never commits it again. If he keeps volitionally sinning, he is a rotter and deserves punishment, and to feel guilty for his act *and* himself--to condemn himself as a *person*.

Randian psychology takes essentially the same view: that wrong-doers who *volitionally* choose not to think straight and be productive are not worthy of their own (or of others') respect, are

rotten people, deserve punishment, and deserve to feel guilty and lose self-respect.

In contradiction to the views of Mowrer and objectivism, there is the humanist-existentialist view (as epitomized in the theory and practice of REBT) that holds that individuals can be wrong, mistaken, irresponsible, and can even *choose* to be wrong-doers, but can nonetheless accept themselves, not be condemned as people, and not deserve to be punished for their irresponsibility. *It would be much better* if they stopped behaving irresponsibly, because in all probability they will harm themselves and be penalized by others if they continue their wrong-doing, but there is no inexorable law of the universe that says that they *ought*, or *must* act responsibly.

REBT completely accepts (and tries to help) sinners while acknowledging and pointing out the error of their sins. It concerns itself with performance but refuses to castigate humans for performing badly. Like Mowrer, Rand condemns sinners and their sins--and thereby provides little hope of helping them become less sinful and more self-accepting. By confusing irresponsibility with sin, and failing to see that human performances may well be reprehensible but that humans *themselves* really cannot be, objectivism further obfuscates the important problem of human worth.

9. What the objectivists are truly intent on upholding are not the individuals' sense of self-acceptance, but their feeling of pride. Pride is a tricky term, because it has several different meanings: (a) an overly high opinion of oneself; exaggerated self-esteem; (b) a sense of one's own dignity or worth; self-respect; (c) delight or satisfaction in one's achievements, possessions, children, etc.; (d) a feeling of superiority over others--one-upmanship. Although the second and third meanings of the term are well within the realm of realism and mental health, the first and fourth meanings are not. Even most people who delight in their own achievements often hide the fact that they really feel superior to other *people* and *that* is why they accept themselves or experience self-esteem.

Another way of stating this is to say that it is a healthy symptom for people to feel pride in the sense of telling themselves, "I acted competently today or I sensibly disciplined myself--and *it* is good that I did so (because such behavior on my part has real advantages)." But it is not so healthy for them to feel pride through telling themselves, "I acted competently today or I sensibly disciplined myself--and *I* am a good person because I did so," or "I acted competently today and therefore I am a better *person* than you."

For when people feel pride (rather than for their *activity* or *character*,) when they behave well, they must also, if they are logical,

denigrate themselves (rather than negatively assess their *activity*) when they perform badly. If, in relation to their *central being*, they accept the virtue of pride, they will also accept the hell of worthlessness; and remain irrationally caught up in global *self*-rating. If they really want to feel consistently worthwhile or self-accepting as *people*, they would do well to surrender the concepts of self-pride and self-deprecation.

Rand apotheosized pride and, as far as I can tell, believed that in order to be proud people must (a) perform volitional acts quite well; (b) be proud of *themselves* for their fine performances; and (c) feel superior to others who perform less well. Thus, she tells us that “when you learn that *pride* is the sum of all virtues, you will learn to live like a man.” (1957). And again, she states that pride is “moral ambitiousness.” (1964) To hold it, you must earn the right to hold yourself at your own highest value by achieving your own moral perfection. Note that Rand’s perfectionism is so blatant here that she actually uses the term “moral perfection” to describe the state that people must achieve if they are to feel pride in themselves.

Branden backs up his mentor’s views on pride by holding: “Of the various pleasures that man can offer himself, the greatest is pride” (Branden, 1964b). He continues: “Self-esteem comes from your conviction of their fundamental efficacy and worth. Pride is the

pleasure you take in yourself in response to *specific* achievements or actions. Self-esteem stems from your capacity to achieve values. Pride results from achieving some particular value(s). Self-esteem is 'I can.' Pride is 'I have.' You can take pride in your actions, in your factual achievements, and in the qualities achieved in your own character. The deepest pride you can experience is that which results from your achievement of self-esteem: since self-esteem is a value that has to be earned, you who earn it feel proud of your attainment," (Branden, 1967b).

Note here that Branden (a) deifies pleasure obtained from feelings of pride; (b) strongly links pride to specific achievements; (c) indicates that self-esteem is possible only to the individual who knows that he *can* achieve and that therefore he *will* feel pride; and (d) shows that the achievement of self-esteem itself is something about which the individual should feel inordinately proud. The objectivist system, in this respect, is consistent.

The trouble is, in the first and last analysis, objectivists insist that individuals can only fully accept themselves if they produce mighty accomplishments. And they had damned well better be proud of themselves for such accomplishments--else they won't experience the greatest of life's pleasures. This may be a great philosophy for promoting human productivity; but it has dubious advantages even in

that respect. For if individuals think that they *must* achieve high productivity in order to accept themselves, they frequently become so terrified of non-achievement that they hardly produce at all. Moreover, even if the objectivist creed encourages productivity, it hardly abets self-acceptance; on the contrary, it will often lead to varying degrees of self-hatred. As the old saying goes, pride goeth before a fall!

10. Rand's position on self-esteem is taken to its ultimate absurdity in this statement by Nathaniel Branden, "An unbreached rationality and a refusal ever to evade one's knowledge or act against it--is the only valid criterion of virtue and the only possible basis for authentic self-esteem," (1967b). Assuming that people have unusual rationality and great determination to use their minds fully, how the devil are they going to assure themselves that their rationality and determination are unbreached? By working very hard at making them so? By becoming objectivists? By berating themselves for their breaches? Hardly! For all this, they will still invariably be fallible, and error-prone.

What, then, are these poor humans to do? Obviously, according to Rand, they must suffer. They can absolutely never, as Branden states, acquire authentic self-esteem. So they are left with a choice of false self-esteem, little self-esteem, or no self-esteem whatever. Grim!

People have, of course, one possible way out. They can forget about objectivism and take themselves into the humanist fold. They can then teach themselves--as the followers of rational emotive behavior therapy teach themselves--to accept themselves without qualification, with their myriads of mistakes, and with or without great achievements; just because they are alive, just because they exist. Then, with this groundwork for true emotional security, they can go on (if they wish) to strive for whatever they would like to achieve in life; and will have a much better chance for internal and external attainment.

Chapter 3

The Capitalists-Libertarian-Objectivist View of Economics*

(*James Walter revised, updated and contributed to this chapter.)

One of the cornerstones of Ayn Rand's philosophy is its deification of capitalism. In the main, her attitudes are unrealistic, dogmatic, and essentially religious, as are other objectivist views. Let me review some of the more blatant irrationalities of objectivist, capitalist, and libertarian economics.

Utopianism. To understand the evangelical upholding of capitalism, we'd better, right from the start, see that Rand and her associates are not defending

*Additional essential suggestions for this chapter were made by Arthur Geller and Bernard Backhaut; however, neither is responsible for the ideas expressed herein..

any capitalist economy that is, or ever has been, in operation. On the contrary, they continually damn the American variety of capitalism, though extolling *some* of its virtues.

To quote Rand, "A system of pure, unregulated laissez-faire capitalism has never yet existed anywhere." (1966b). What existed were mixed economies, capitalism and statism--that is freedom and control, a combination of voluntary choice and government coercion. America is the freest country on earth, but it always has had elements of statism in its economy, developed by intellectuals who were horribly committed to the philosophy of statism--yes, horribly!

In fact, all economies, past and present, were and are a mixture of capitalism and collectivism. Moreover, it seems that a mixed economy is the only possible economic state. The more extreme a state is, either capitalist or collective, the less likely it is to last. The final economic form of the state will vary with culture, technology, the current environment and its resources. Since democracy, almost by definition, is based on compromise, it is logical that the economy of a democracy would be a mixture of collectivism and capitalism.

Rand's idealistic notion of laissez-faire capitalism, if it did exist, is utopian and impractical for many reasons:

1. It is based on the supposition that people can live successfully on a *purely* selfish basis, without considering members of the social group. It does not consider the dualistic possibility that, as I noted in chapter one, people may be better off when they consider themselves *first* and the members of their

community as a close *second*. I accept Rand's observation that every act is selfish since altruistic acts bring pleasant mental feelings or assuage mental pain. However, she abandons that logic when she exalts capitalism, implying that money and production themselves are a higher pleasure, and that they bring pleasant feelings innately. In reality, one can only buy things that might cause good feelings. After necessities are met, it is a personal preference as to where one finds pleasant feelings. Money's "value" will always be diminished by inflation and material things decay over time. While one can run out of money and possessions or have them taken away, one will always have the ability to sing, create art, tell jokes, hug a friend, kiss a lover, play a sport, etc., -- if one invests in developing such. True friendships and skills grow with time and practice without the drudgery and fear of competition. Money and physical assets demand constant care and the pleasure of possession is dualistic with the fear of loss.

Since people depend on their community for support and the enhanced wealth and health that living in that community brings, it seems that people will be better off if they do think of the community as a close second. Rand assumes that if people *only* go after what they want and think this is best, they will never harm others and or interfere with others' basic interests. In fact, Rand keeps claiming that the pure and entirely uncontrolled capitalist --if it ever existed--would invariably help all people by its productive drives and would rarely harm anyone. There is no evidence that this would be true. There is considerable historical evidence and reason for believing it would not.

For example, until the 1920's the utilities in the United States operated under little constraint. Their rates corresponded to the maximum amount that could be extorted from the community, and their service was usually poor. Many communities had to take over, or at least regulate, these utilities in order to provide a decent level of service to consumers. The recent Enron utility scandal has confirmed that capitalists have not changed, and still *need* regulation.

Governments that have existed under capitalism have seen fit to regulate industrial production, and usually in rigorous ways, because the majority of citizens who backed these governments believed that capitalism *is* to some degree inimical to the public welfare. This is not to say that capitalism is an unmitigated social evil, for it clearly is not. It has had great advantages and is possibly the most efficient kind of economy that humans have yet invented. But in its pure laissez-faire form, it appears to have great limitations--as most economists admit. In fact, capitalism is inherently inefficient. If there is to be competition, there must be choice. Choice requires that there be more product available than in demand. That means there will be products and services that either are not consumed or sold at a loss. That is, there will be lost effort, unused real estate, and wasted materials in the production of the products not sold or sold at a loss. Moreover there are many non-productive tasks that capitalism requires, which I will detail later in this chapter.

Rand's vehement espousal of unadulterated capitalism is highly utopian--although it would be an interesting experiment to try pure laissez-fairism, just to

see how successfully it can work. But because this kind of experiment most likely will not be attempted, Rand and her cohorts are safe in dogmatically insisting that ultra-pure capitalism *would* work; and, with this rigid assertion, they excoriate both semi-capitalistic and non-capitalistic economies.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Rand's view of pure capitalism resembles the views of many fanatical religions. Modified Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, say purists, do not work, and are even abominable; only an unalloyed, completely orthodox version of these religions would really work. When asked where one might find such an unqualified religious setup, they often reply: "In the Kingdom of Heaven." This statement is then taken as "proof" of the fact that pure religion is good, and all alloyed forms are bad. Q.E.D.!

The objectivist argument that mixed capitalism is horrendous because it cannot provide the heavenly advantages of pure capitalism is similar to this fanatically religious view. Essentially, in fact, it *is* a utopian religious view¹.

2. Objectivism confuses capitalism with freedom and implies that complete capitalism would mean complete human freedom. Thus, Rand states that if you uphold freedom, you must uphold individual rights. If you uphold individual rights, you must uphold a person's right to her/his own life, to his/her own liberty, to the pursuit of his/her own happiness. (1966b). This means you must uphold a political system that thoroughly guarantees and protects these

¹ Actually redundant since "Utopia" is Greek for "not on earth," and religions dwell on an afterlife, which is not on earth.

rights-- the politico-economic system of *capitalism*. Rand's allegation is invalid for several reasons:

a. Humans are never really totally free. They have only a *limited* right to their own lives, their own liberty, and their own pursuit of happiness. They are restricted by their biological heredity, which sets distinct limits on them.

Secondly, they almost always live in a social group and have to suffer *some* restrictions in order to get by in that group.

Third, under any economic system they still have to eat; and they must frequently surrender a considerable amount of their freedom in order to eat regularly. Capitalism forces them to work in order to eat; and only under some kind of social welfare system where all people were guaranteed a minimum income, whether or not they worked, would they have maximum freedom. Rand defines *force* in purely physical terms and, by definition, says that a person is free when he is not subjected to physical force. But this definition ignores the powerful forces that any conceivable kind of capitalism will exert against what we ordinarily call human freedom.

b. Capitalism by no means protects an individual's "rights" to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Not even ideal capitalism, such as Rand demands but has little possibility of ever existing, does this: For under pure laissez-faire capitalism people can be left to starve to death (because their particular skills are not wanted), can be deprived of liberty (by being forced to engage in some kind of work they do not enjoy), and can be restrained from achieving their own

happiness, by not being able to accumulate enough capital to make sufficient money. Under qualified capitalism, which exists in “capitalist” countries, millions of people have been and still are continually deprived of their “rights” to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is quite possible that Rand’s ideal capitalism may provide individuals with *more* freedom than do alternative economic systems. But under its purest form it would offer very little protection from the capitalists who would limit their choices and make their rights irrelevant under the monopolies that would form - monopolies that Rand advocates.

Under “pure” capitalism, society would be left at the mercy of people who are concerned with making a maximum amount of money from the use of land, labor, capital, and by entrepreneurship. Since it appears² to be in the capitalist’s best interest to keep the costs of production as low as possible, a successful capitalist might easily drive wages below the subsistence level, if the supply of labor was greater than the demand. Also under ideal capitalism, if machines can do a job at a lower cost than people, “pure” capitalism would use people without concern for their welfare.

For example, in the last century, millions of farm laborers were replaced by automatic cotton picking and sorting machines. The farm owners who introduced these machines were not concerned with the welfare of their displaced laborers.

Another example is the New England textile industry. Quite often, the textiles were the only game in town. After World War II, many mill owners

² Since one capitalist’s worker is another’s customer, by driving down wages, capitalists drive down the purchasing power of their customers--therefore making less total profit, though the few make more.

decided to close their mills and move to the South, where labor costs were cheaper. The result was a rate of unemployment as high as twenty-five per cent in the North. If the government hadn't provided welfare services and some job retraining, what would have stopped the unemployed people from starving? The Northern mill owners did not take care of them!

This job destruction is worse today with 'high tech' jobs as well as more factory jobs going overseas to India, Pakistan, Thailand, and other Asian, African, and South American countries. Pure capitalism justifies its callousness with the absurd assumption that there is effortless, easy mobility of labor, resources, and capital, from one place to another. Capitalists contend that displaced workers, resources, and capital will rapidly move to where the work is, implying that the total costs will be less and the total benefits will be greater for the economy as a whole. The reality is that the community, the majority of workers, and the supporting local businesses will incur a great loss, greater in total than the individual capitalist gains. The whole point of a company moving is to drive down wages by moving to an area with more desperate, lower paid workers and less health and environmental regulations. This destroys the environment, the everyday lives and the relationships of a community. In addition, it destroys all the secondary, tertiary, etc. facilities and businesses that need and support that business, its workers, and its customers. Of equal importance is the effective loss, through under utilization of the government infrastructure, such as roads, utilities, school systems, and government administration. It imposes the delay and burden

of building or improving the same infrastructure and supporting companies for the new communities. The capitalist is, in fact, imposing a huge tax and financial burden on both communities so he or she can make a few more dollars.

c. Although collectivist economies have partly protected the individual's pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness, they have done so to a minimal degree in many instances. Moreover, just as capitalism --as Rand shows--*can* encourage considerably more life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, so have some collectivist economies. A collectivist system that included real safeguards for human life, liberty, and happiness could definitely be worked out, and is collectivism's stated goal and active pursuit, unlike capitalism which seeks to minimize others income while maximizing the capitalists' wealth. Since neither ideal capitalism nor ideal collectivism exist, we can only evaluate the actual mixed systems in existence and throughout history, in order to discover which components work best together. To think that political despotism *must* accompany collectivism is nonsense; since (as Rand points out) we have a reasonably collectivist and state controlled economy in the United States at present, and still have a large measure of political freedom.

3. Rand's "pure" capitalism requires an ethical outlook by all members of a society that is utopian, has never existed, and probably will never exist. In fact, if it did, we might choose not to be capitalistic! This outlook has two contradictory aspects. On the one hand, it is entirely selfish; on the other hand it requires ideal rationality. Thus, Branden notes that capitalism implied and required a system of

ethics that does not yet exist: a morality of *rational self-interest* (1965). If altruists foolishly assert that the profit motive is evil, that able people must work for the good of society, then they resemble devout collectivists, who often espouse totalitarianism.

What Branden (following Rand) seems to mean, is that the pure capitalists *only* work for their self-interests and do not concern themselves with those of others (although, of course, they must consider others to *some* extent in order to trade with them³). This kind of extreme selfishness has never worked in human affairs and probably never will: for (a) it is social Darwinism that would lead to the annihilation of many weak individuals, and (b) it would result in continual upheaval, dislocation, and overall loss to the economy when the strongest persons bankrupted their competitors. This would cause the dislocation and devaluation of the competitors' assets, workers, suppliers' workers, and the subsequent discomfort and loss for the society. Since competition never ends, all companies would fail over time, wreaking havoc again and again.

Actually, I believe, if capitalism were to be a really good system, what would be needed is for humans to have a morality of 'rational self-interest' that included (a) long-range, sustainable pleasure – that is to say, rational hedonism, instead of short-term, destructive hedonism; (b) some considerable degree of social as well as of individual interest; and (c) a recognition of the fact that as long as human

³ The capitalist would be better off if they consider the interests of others more since the more and wealthier the customers, the bigger the sales and profits for the capitalists overall.

beings live together, it is desirable (though not absolutely necessary) that they engage in a good amount of cooperation, collaboration, and compromise.

If every capitalistic entrepreneur were guided by this kind of morality of rational self-interest, then capitalism might survive without bringing various kinds of state control that it has always engendered. For under these conditions, capitalists might not deplete the land of irreplaceable natural resources, pollute the atmosphere with noxious chemicals, make many of the waterways unfit for human enjoyment or animal life, market harmful drugs, etc.

However, since capitalists must compete to survive, if their competitors resort to unethical⁴ actions that give them an advantage over an the ethical company in the short run, the long run benefits will never be achieved and everyone suffers. The fact is the vast majority of men and women are not entirely ethical. And if they were, they might well decide that a rational, mixed form of collectivism, rather than a pure form of capitalism, would be the better kind of economic system to follow.

Rand espouses a one-sided view of capitalism that simply ignores its other facets. She exaggerates that it is terrible when people criticize consumerism in contemporary capitalistic society. She rants about "irrational" economists who proclaim that the essence (and the moral justification) of capitalism is "service to others--to the consumers," that the consumers' wishes are the absolute edicts ruling the free market (1966b).

⁴ "Ethics" is derived from "customary", in that society has *made it* survive in the long run.

Actually, capitalism, like just about every other human system, is not one-sided; rather it is dualistic--the two things are not separate at all. Just as production is the precondition of consumption, so is consumption the precondition of production. For no capitalist, no matter how free the market, would think of producing anything unless they were reasonably sure that, sooner or later, there would be a good market for it. If they knew, for example, that they could make a perfect mousetrap and make it cheaper and better than any of their competitors, they would still not produce it if there were no mice around to be caught, and no people interested in catching them. Although capitalists would normally not manufacture anything *merely* to serve others, serving others is exactly what they do; it just has to be profitable. Thus, serving others cannot be entirely divorced from capitalist motives. Moreover, although Rand keeps emphasizing productivity, and tends to make manufacturers the heroes of her books--such as Rearden in *Atlas Shrugged*-- the fact remains that production today is a diminishing *part* of the capitalist system, while the production of *services* (such as entertainment, advertising, teaching, medicine, psychology, and research) is now a large and integral part of capitalism. While up to 90% of the population once worked in agriculture, today less than 1% work in farming, due to harvesters, and mobile factories, etc. While 65% of the population once was employed in manufacturing, there is now less than 18% of the US population in manufacturing, due to cheaper, more reliable machines, computers, and robotics. The same is happening to the service industry today--as we see self-checkout at K-mart, self-check-in at

airports, and self-ordering online. Dualistically, this frees people from much of the drudgery of life. Jeremy Rifkin, in his book, "The End of Work", points out that soon there will be almost no work as computers and robots eventually take over repetitive tasks. The problem is that one capitalist's worker is another capitalist's customer – for when they fire a worker, they fire a customer too; if they pay workers less, their customers buy less and their profits eventually fall.

It is absurd, therefore, to assume that either production or consumption is a precondition for the other; or that as long as the producer is left untrammelled, capitalist heaven will manifest itself here on earth. It is even more absurd to set up production as the one precondition for reason, justice, reality, and ultimately happiness. True, most of us would not last very long if someone did not produce food; but even with sufficient production--reason, justice, and happiness would hardly prevail automatically!

Ayn Rand enthusiastically favors capitalistic monopolies and is vehemently opposed to antitrust laws. She anathemizes "coercive monopoly" or, as her associate, Alan Greenspan Chairman of the Federal Reserve for the last decade, backed her by saying, a business can set its prices and production policies independent of the market, with immunity from competition and the law of supply and demand, (1965a). An economy dominated by such monopolies would be rigid and stagnant. She insists that such a coercive monopoly can only be accomplished by government intervention, in the form of special regulations,

subsidies, or franchises, and never can result from the operation of the laws of a free market. These objectivist views do not make much sense for several reasons:

a. While one of the essences of capitalism is the operation of a free market, its practical and actual essence is profit making. Real-life capitalists will do almost *anything* to derive a profit; and will think nothing of abrogating various laws, especially those of supply and demand, if they can even temporarily make a good income from doing so. Many--indeed most--of the special regulations, subsidies, or franchises which governments grant in order to create coercive monopolies are granted because some capitalist venture lobbied, bribed, propagandized and otherwise pressured government into granting it such special privileges. As long as such privileges are profitable, and capitalists are allowed to pursue the profit motive fairly freely, there is every reason to believe that businesses will continue to demand and receive government-backed monopolistic privileges and that the operations of the free market will *not* be maintained.

Capitalists who construct coercive monopolies may be cutting their own throats by doing so, but that seems to be one of the main conditions intrinsic to any brand of capitalism that has yet existed or will probably ever will. Various capitalists, ostensibly for their own profit motives, cut their own throats (as well as those of their competitors) in many ways. Tough! But this is the grim reality of profit making that Rand fails to acknowledge. Her "capitalist" never does anything wrong or stupid, because, by definition, he is an all-knowing, all-beneficent god who *can* do no wrong.

b. Although it may have been true at one time that coercive monopolies were not necessary and that it was possible (but not easy!) to avoid their growth, this is probably not true today. In the old days, almost anyone with a little capital could open up a business and did not have to get involved with any kind of governmental agency.

Today, many industries--such as the production of large aircraft--require an investment of literally billions of dollars, which is a small, but significant portion of the total economy; A huge investment gamble for any one firm. Because of that, capitalists require some kind of guarantee that parts of the government (such as the armed forces) will purchase large numbers of the finished product. Even more important, perhaps, is the fact that there are certain industries, such as atomic power, which are just too big for any ordinary-sized business, and have to be run largely along the lines of a coercive monopoly. Moreover, competition would require duplication of time, energy, and waste of too much of our resources. For, such industries have to be regulated to a considerable extent by government agencies; and they have to be subsidized or guaranteed by the government as well. Therefore, if it was feasible in Adam Smith's day for business to operate completely along the lines of the free market, and history shows that even then it wasn't--it seems clear the huge benefits from a single, regulated producer in the mass production of certain *kinds* of products, has made increasing governmental control over those businesses a virtual necessity.

c. The capitalist economists assume that the "free market" has mobility of resources, infinite availability of capital to start competing companies, and virtually instant creation competing factories and support systems. Additionally, they assume that there will be consumers with the ready cash who know about all products including their relative merits and faults. They also assume that the customers or products have costless travel to or from the producers. However, reality is full of uncertainties, misperceptions, ignorance, subtle differences, and limited time, which have significant consequences. The market is never free; it is full of scarcities, vast distances between the parts, irrationalities, inertia, stupidity, and distractions that insure there will always be inequities.

Unrealism. Ayn Rand ceaselessly talks about the necessity of accepting reality--because A is A and existence exists, we'd better face these facts and live according to empirically observable happenings. In regard to life in general (as we shall show later in this book) and to capitalism in particular, Rand's objectivism is just about as unrealistic and anti-empirical as it can be. It remains in a world of deep denial about its "rational" fictions, and it invents innumerable fantasies about capitalism, refusing to admit that it is fantasizing. For example:

1. Ayn Rand states, "without property rights, no other rights are possible," (1964.) This is hogwash, and has been contradicted in many past and present societies. It has been virtually impossible for many enslaved peoples, for serfs, for prisoners, and for citizens of collectivist nations to own property; and yet it is ridiculous to claim that such individuals have no rights whatever. Property-

deprived persons in most countries are legally protected from theft of their personal possessions, from rape, from assault, from libel, from murder, etc.

In some collectivist jurisdictions, in fact (such as the former Soviet Union), citizens have certain rights--such as the right to free health services and free education--that they do not have in jurisdictions where they are allowed to hold any amount of property they can lay their hands on. So Ayn Rand's view that without property rights no other rights are possible is clearly contradictory to reality, and is a product of her own wishful thinking. Because she would *like* to see capitalism as all-good, and non-capitalism as all-evil, she "proves" that this is so. Only by giving a special definition to "property" which *makes* all rights property rights does Rand's statement make (purely tautological) sense!

2. "When I say 'capitalism,' Rand writes, "I mean a full, pure, uncontrolled unregulated laissez-faire capitalism," (1964). She means capitalism with a separation of state and economics, like the separation of church and state. But, although it may be possible to separate the state and church, it is highly unlikely that the state and economics can be equally separated. The state *is* part of the economic system; and in this day and age, it inevitably will be something of a producer, a seller, a consumer, a financier, etc.

Even under Rand's proposed system, the state must provide for national defense. However, under such a system, of course, the state does not produce armaments; it buys them from the capitalists. So, even here, a certain amount of interaction between the public and private sector is necessary. And since the state

is a huge, monopolistic institution (and not merely a community of free traders) some of its interactions with capitalists will be effectively coercive. For example, it will force them to manufacture armaments in a certain manner and sometimes under secretive conditions.

It is therefore quite unrealistic for Ayn Rand not to recognize the inevitable voluntary and coercive tie-ups between the state and economics. And it is probably even more unrealistic for her to cop out by claiming that capitalism is the system of the future--"if mankind is to have a future," (1964). If objectivism is to have a future, it had better face facts!

3. "Capitalism," states Rand's credo, "demands the best of every man--his rationality--and rewards him accordingly," (1962). Why? Because it leaves people free to choose the work they like, to trade their product for the products of others, and to go as far on the road to achievement as their ability and ambition will carry them. Their success depends on what Rand calls "the objective of their work" and on the rationality of those who recognize that value. When people are free to trade, the best product and the best judgment wins. They also raise the standard of living, and of thought, ever higher for all those who take part in productive activity (Rand, 1961b).

What a pious hope! First of all, if men truly used reason and reality as their only arbiter, they could easily devise *many* different kinds of economic systems, which would work well. Perhaps capitalism would then be the best system they could invent and work with; but, quite possibly, it would not be.

More to the point: People do *not* use reason and reality as their only arbiter; and it is probable that, at least for the next millennium, they won't. Considering how they really behave and are likely to behave in the near future, capitalism, as we know it and as it is every likely to be, deviates enormously from the ideal of leaving all people free to choose the work they like, to specialize in it, to trade their product for the products of others, and to go as far on the road to achievement as their ability and ambition will carry them. Most people, including some of the most "successful", under capitalism end up in work that they hardly like, not trained for what they enjoy, and sometimes blocked from achieving what they desire to achieve, in spite of their ability and ambition.

However, in the early stages of capitalist enterprise, when the economic caste system is still loosely set, it may be possible for many, if not all, able and ambitious individuals to achieve what they would like. But after just a few generations, when enough competent and energetic people have amassed their fortunes, built their economic empires, and willed their gains to their heirs⁵, enormous restrictions are placed on the capitalistic activities or would-be activities of able and ambitious individuals.

Of course, the same applies to collectivism. The famous motto: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," might work when an entire society lives on the borderline of survival, since the individuals accept that the survival of others in that society directly affects their own survival. However,

⁵ Another of Rand's double standards: It is the right of the rich to give their enormous wealth to those who have not earned it – their heirs - but wrong for the state to give a minimum standard of living to those in need.

once there is enough for the necessities, most will feel taken advantage of by those who do not work as hard or as much. In their pure forms, which are extremist, both systems demand an extreme, a society of super-humans, for their systems to work.

Moreover, a large organization is far different from a startup. As innovative, startups grow into high volume producers, the requirements to run them change. At best, the "organization man" then tends to replace the true entrepreneur; and at worst, the real individualist tends to become a business "drop-out" and may end up as an alcoholic, a drug addict, a jailbird, a hippie, or a general misfit as we see in so many of the heirs of the rich and the wealthier middle class.

The capitalist system, in its youth, is one thing; in its middle age, it is a contraption of a different color! As it "grows," individualism seems to wane; and what Rand and her associates deem its impurities and its perversions are, at least in part, inevitabilities of its aging process. 'Organization men' are "smart" gamblers in that they limit their investments, risks; to areas that they believe have a very high chance to be profitable. The innovator or entrepreneur is the real risk taker, often betting all he or she has on a risky venture. However, the innovator has small up-front cash requirement since he does not pay for his own time or rent for his garage. A large corporation has to pay for all of this plus high salaries. The 'organization woman' realizes that it is a better bet to buy innovation than to do it. It is far wiser to pay the proven, successful, small startup a fantastic profit in the entrepreneur's eyes, far less than the total research and development

costs of a large corporation. Furthermore, all the entrepreneurs that lose money represent failed innovations for which the corporation does not have to pay; Rather, it is absorbed by the entrepreneurs who lose everything. Entrepreneurship is a lottery where one person makes a million dollars while another fourteen million lose one dollar.

4. Rand's followers say, "The fundamental issue...is not what *kind* of economic controls a government enforces, nor on whose behalf; the real issue is a controlled economy versus an uncontrolled economy. This issue is slavery versus freedom," (Branden, 1965b). Several errors are stated and implied in this position.

a. Obviously, a controlled economy--such as we largely have in the United States today, and exists in most parts of the world--hardly means complete slavery. It has its disadvantages, but it also *frees* those who live under it, from great price fluctuations, uninsured unemployment, facing poverty in old age, harm from unlicensed medications, and so forth. Freedom, as Rand defines it, narrowly means freedom from physical coercion; but it includes all kinds of other forms of coercion that may well be pernicious.

b. It is highly doubtful today whether the issue any longer is a controlled versus an uncontrolled economy. Uncontrolled economies never seem to have existed anywhere; and in isolated cases, we have already shown they seem to be much less practicable today than they ever were in the past. Whether Rand and Branden like it or not, the fundamental issue throughout history, and today, seems

to be what kind of economic controls a modern government enforces and on whose behalf.

c. The implication of Rand's "free" capitalism is that government controls exist entirely in *themselves*, because the state, government, legislature, or some other body insists on these controls. Actually, even monarch-led governments, these days, are almost always voted in and kept in office by *people*--by the citizens who live under the government's regulations. And it is usually these *people* who are demanding the government's economic controls. Moreover (as I noted above) the people who today tend to ask for most of the government controls are businesspersons themselves--who, "oddly enough," seem to find such controls to their advantage. Yet it is common to see these same individuals vehemently and dogmatically advocate Rand's philosophy when it comes to workers. These are also the same people who advocate the end to inheritance taxes, government bailouts of large corporations, and demonize welfare.

In any complex, sophisticated society, there are controls--whether they are instituted by the will of the majority or by a powerful minority. The question, then, is not whether we have a controlled or an uncontrolled economy, but who has the control of the economic system: the government, those duly elected by the majority of the people who are pawns in the economy, or businesspersons who fare well during good and bad times? Rand's choice is, without doubt, the businesspersons, acting purely in their own interests.

d. For reasons such as these, Rand's position on a controlled economy is highly unrealistic, accords with no known reality or observed behavior of humans, and is futuristic only in an unrealistic way.

5. Ayn Rand holds that there are three schools of thought on the nature of good: (a) the *intrinsic* theory, which contends that the good is inherent in certain things or actions as such, regardless of their context and consequences; (b) the *subjectivist* theory, which holds that the good bears no relationship to the facts of reality, that it is a product of people's consciousness, created by their feelings, desires, or whims; and (c) her *objective* theory, which holds that the good is neither an attribute of things in themselves nor of people's emotional states, but an evaluation of the facts of reality by their consciousness, according to a rational standard of value.

But, there are rational problems with this. "Rationality" entails comparing facts and processes so one can extrapolate them to achieve a desired result. In this argument, however, the words "good" and "value" are circular: "Good" means something you "value". Who would not value the 'good'? The origin of "good" revolves around something that fits well or that is on target. As a result, one of its other definitions is "likely to live or last," the same as "ethical" and "moral." With humans and most creatures, if one is happy, one is more likely to survive. Therefore, Maslov's "hierarchy of needs" is a much more functional definition of the "good." Therefore, a rational process will value those things that promote sufficient prosperity for a reasonably secure life and happiness in the long run.

Rand claims that of all the social systems in history, capitalism alone is based on her objective theory of values--that only her theory of values morally bans rule by force, (1966b). Her objectivist allegation is unrealistic for these reasons:

a. Capitalism is the only system implicitly based on an objective theory of values *according to Ayn Rand and her followers*. Many devout believers in capitalism also believe in the intrinsic or subjectivist theory of values; and many believers in the "objective" theory of values (including many philosophers in the collectivist countries,) are quite anti-capitalistic.

b. Like collectivism, forced rule is opposed by the great majority of social and political thinkers--and a good many of those who oppose it hold what Ayn Rand calls the intrinsic or the subjectivist view of the good.

Again, a number of those who uphold rule by physical force definitely uphold, as well, an objective theory of value--including, for example, Lenin and Trotsky. Such believers in physical force merely happen to believe that an evaluation of the facts by human consciousness according to a "rational" standard of value *does* lead to the conclusion that, at least temporarily, forceful political rule is a good thing. The fact that both Rand and I might disagree with their evaluation does not gainsay the fact that they believe in her version of reality and rationality.

Moreover, Rand's version of capitalism does depend on a state and force to settle contractual disputes and to protect property rights, copyrights, and patents. Rand admits outright that the state must exist and that force must be used to

protect the state, unlike her even more unrealistic libertarian (anarchy) counterparts.

c. Rand and her acolytes imply that there is only *one* possible evaluation of the facts of reality by human consciousness, and that there is only *one* rational standard of value by which this singularly correct evaluation can be made. They also vehemently (or should I say rigidly?) avow that this single "rational" evaluation of the facts can only conceivably lead to one conclusion: That capitalism is the *only* good economic system that can *ever* be invented by man. These monolithic, unequivocally held beliefs in this respect are hardly in accord with reality; and they do not appear to be "rational." Rather, they are religious absolutes or assertions of "truths" without sound empirical or practical foundation. Moreover, since capitalism allegedly maximizes money and goods, objectivists imply that money and goods are the only rational values of life.

d. The objective theory of values that Rand finds so implicit in capitalism exists in Rand's head and not uniquely in capitalism itself. None of the large or even medium-sized capitalist corporations behave the way Rand suggests they do. Decision is reached mainly after committee discussion, and the decision that is reached is usually not unanimous. Furthermore, outside consultants are often called in to give their opinions. Elements of collectivism, collaboration, and cooperativeness are rife in virtually capitalist enterprises, and elements of "rugged individualism" are relatively rare. A corporation is an economic dictatorship which regularly intrudes into its employee's private lives with homework, travel, social

and political prohibitions, social and political commitments, dress codes, and other requirements. We see corporations imposing their political views through ownership, propaganda, and censorship of the news in an effort to make everyone believe and behave alike.

6. "Within every category of goods and services offered on a free market," Ayn Rand asserts, "it is the purveyor of the best product at the cheapest price..." who gains the greatest financial rewards, not automatically nor immediately nor by fiat, but by *virtue* of the free market, (1966b). This market teaches every participant to look for the *objective* best he/she can arrange and penalizes those who act on irrational considerations. It seems counter-intuitive, but when one tries to maximize any particular thing, everything else must suffer neglect. You never reach the maximum, or not for long, since the body develops behavioral dysfunctions such as alcoholism. The greatest possible long-term pleasure from life comes to those who seek reasonable balance and acceptance, not the most or best. Rand's statement is hogwash, as virtually any reasonably intelligent student of economics should be able to see. Why? Because:

a. Frequently, the greatest financial rewards in a given field, such as the field of producing furniture, are won by the firms that make a shoddy product at a cheap price, or that produce a good product at an inflated price. For although it may be true that the consumers who buy these shoddy cheap products or good overpriced products are being penalized for acting on irrational considerations, the free market clearly does not teach them to act otherwise. In some cases--as in

the purchase of furniture, which usually lasts for a long period of time even when it is shoddily produced--the free market would rarely induce people to change their poor buying habits; and in other cases--as when cheap toys are purchased and break very quickly--the free market *still* is not effective enough to teach many purchasers to buy more rationally next time.

The deficiencies of the capitalist system: greediness, and other "irrationalities" of people (who wrongly persuade themselves that they *can* keep getting something for nothing,) combine to defeat the good "intent" of the free market. Rand refuses to acknowledge either of these deficiencies or irrationalities. Ideal capitalists, a la Ayn Rand's fictions, would presumably not produce shoddy goods (because they are only interested in *fair* trade) and would not be greedy or irrational. Neither would angels be.

b. The "rationality-producing tendencies" of the free market are beautifully defeated in many (or most) instances by other aspects of the profit-making system. Thus, it is the aim of commercial advertising, publicity, high pressure selling, and other forms of propaganda to induce the purchaser to buy products that are not the best or the cheapest in their field; and this kind of propaganda frequently pays off. It could be said in this respect that Rand means the best product of the advertising agency or sales promotion staff wins out in the free market of advertising and in selling! But this obviously is not what Ayn Rand means. She really thinks it is the best *goods* that win out in the free market regardless of advertising and sales promotions; and we all know from real life that

she is often wrong about this. Rand may contend that in a *truly* free market everyone would be productive, informed, and fair to the greatest possible extent. But this concept of the truly free market is indeed religious and supernatural--for where is she going to find the *human* beings who behave as this kind of system demands that they behave? In fact, as Socrates observed long ago, the goal of every trader is "to buy low and sell high" – not to give equal value for value received.

c. The objectivist position is that the free market teaches every participant to look for the objective best "*within the category of his own competence.*" This may not have been a bad rule several hundred years ago, during the early days of capitalist trading when buyers often were quite competent to select rugged rather than shoddy goods, because they frequently had previously produced rugged goods in their own workshops and homes. Today, however, the buyer is usually quite divorced from producing anything but the one particular kind of material he may work on in his own factory (and he may even have little experience with that kind of production if he does non-producing work at this factory). Consequently, he is *not* usually competent to look for the objective best in what he purchases, and he can easily be misled by various kinds of sales pitches. The main aim of marketing is to sell products at the highest profit, not the best profit or deal for the customer. It is far easier to confuse and convince than produce a high quality product. Moreover, there is a considerable cost in time and travel money to the consumer who would research and be completely informed

about every purchasing decision. If such a standard were demanded, people would be spending all their time researching and evaluating instead of accepting, buying, and enjoying.

Rand talks about free markets and about the interaction of supply and demand. Economic theory teaches us that in order for there to be a truly free market there must exist (among other conditions) many firms, no one of which accounts for more than a small percentage of the total production of goods; homogeneity--that is, all firms must produce identical products; costless movement of goods, workers, facilities, support, and auxiliary organizations, infrastructure, and buyers (the best goods may be too far away to travel to acquire or the cost of that travel may diminish that superiority); and fully informed buyers and sellers. If a firm makes a better product, it becomes (with limitations) a monopolist; for, its product being better than all others, it becomes different from the other firms. Therefore, the law of free markets is rendered inapplicable, and is only likely to remain in force under rare conditions--which certainly do not exist in the complex society of today.

d. Consumerism, at present, is based much more on fad and fashion than on any "intrinsic" value for the goods that are purchased. Therefore, the woman who knows that the dress she is purchasing today will be outmoded next season does not particularly care if it is shoddily made and will fall apart at the seams in a year or two. And even the husband and wife who realize that they must refurnish their house or apartment every few years to keep up with the Joneses will not be

too offended if the furniture starts coming apart a few years later. With advertisers, salesmen, and publicists, again, ceaselessly pushing the individual into making unnecessary, fashion-impelled purchases, and with the average customers having such a dire need for social popularity that they cannot too easily resist purchasing many things for different reasons, Rand's view of the free market encouraging buying and selling for rational considerations becomes ill-founded and unrealistic. Capitalism, moreover, *fosters* conspicuous consumption (as Thorstein Veblen pointed out many years ago)--and thereby creates much of the irrational buying that clearly sabotages the rational considerations that are, according to Rand, implicit in the free market.

7. The myth that quality products win out under capitalism is continually perpetuated in Rand's writings. Thus, we read that a given product may not be appreciated at once, particularly if it is too radical an innovation; but, aside from irrelevant accidents, "it wins in the long run," (Rand, 1966b). Does it? Perhaps--if the producers of this product can last long enough for the customers to finally perceive it to be superior; But in innumerable instances they go broke--especially considering the high investment and running costs of production these days--long before their fine product wins a public hearing. Or someone else beats them out with a poor product that looks better but soon deteriorates. Or someone puts on a huge sales campaign for a somewhat different product that really isn't as useful as theirs, but which takes over so much of the market that they cannot survive.

Take, for example, dishwashing equipment. Two gadgets were invented a good many years ago that nicely solve the problem of washing a few dishes at a time. One is a cleaning brush that attaches to the sink itself and that holds a reservoir of liquid detergent, so that you can conveniently wash a dish without wetting your hands with a dishrag or sponge. The other is a cleaning brush that is not attached to the sink but which has its own plastic handle, in which you can place water and detergent, and which again enables you to wash a dish without wetting your hands. Both these kinds of brushes have been manufactured for many years by various firms; but these firms keep discontinuing them because their sale is not sufficiently profitable. Why? Because (a) many people, largely because of advertising, would wrongly rather use a huge electric dishwasher for washing a dish or two; and (b) the small gadgets are not profitable enough per unit to warrant large advertising campaigns, while the large appliances are. Instances like this, where useful and quality products have been unsuccessful under capitalism, can be cited endlessly.

Rand may object that, under her ideal kind of capitalism, capitalists would only be interested in being productive and not in selling "unproductive" goods by means of advertising. If so, this ideal capitalism simply does not in the least resemble modern, real capitalism and "should" really be called *perfectionism*, *utopian capitalism*, or something similar, to distinguish it from historical capitalism. Moreover, if this ideal system existed and a single capitalist started to produce shoddy goods, used high-powered advertising, and employed other

common capitalistic methods, he would quickly drive most of his competitors out of business, and the system would become the non-ideal capitalism that exists today and that Rand so violently deprecates. Capitalism, the “unknown ideal,” obviously needs ideal (and presently unknowable) people!

8. As might be expected, Rand includes a great deal of nonsense about labor and its value. For example, she says that the economic value of people’s work is determined, in a free market, by a single principle: by the voluntary consent of those who are willing to trade them their work or products in return. This, she states, is the moral meaning of the law of supply and demand; it rejects two “vicious” doctrines: the tribal premise and altruism. The supply and demand law recognizes that a person works to support *his own life*--as, by his nature, he must--that he has to be guided by his rational self-interest, and that if he wants to trade with others, he cannot expect sacrificial victims, i.e., he cannot expect to receive values without trading commensurate values in return. The sole criterion of what is commensurate, in this context, is the free, voluntary, un-coerced judgment of the traders (Rand, 1966b). Some of the unrealistic statements in this paragraph include:

a. No free market has ever existed, (which at least is *one* point on which I and Ayn Rand agree!) Or ever will exist, because, as I stated, even if it did, the value of people’s work in that market would hardly be determined by a *single* principle. Not only would it be determined by the voluntary consent of those who are willing to trade them their work or products in return, but it would also be

determined by (i) their innate abilities, (ii) their willingness to work at all, (iii) their willingness to work well or badly, mightily or weakly; (iv) their ability to convince their employer that they were working well, whether or not they were; (v) the number and ability of other people who are available for the jobs they want; (vi) the strength of their desires for various necessities and luxuries, etc. It is remarkable how Rand often seems to reduce the principles that determine various human behaviors to a single rule. This kind of simplistic thinking, however, hardly covers the known facts of a much more complex reality.

b. The “two vicious doctrines” that Rand talks about--the tribal premise and altruism--here basically seem to be the same doctrine: that people sometimes put others, or the members of their tribe, above themselves. Why are they “vicious?” Because she assumes that they always are taken to great extremes, and that those who follow them *only* subjugate themselves to others and *never* strive for self-interest. This extremist way of thinking is typical of Ayn Rand; but it is doubtful if any non-objectivists actually follow it. Also: Rand *defines* altruism as being wholly self-sacrificial (when, as usually thought, it includes pleasure for the altruist and is therefore partly based on self-interest). And she *defines* all self-sacrifice as vicious (without empirically proving that it really is). Her statement, therefore, that altruism is vicious is actually a definitional, tautological, fanatically religious proposition that is not related to reality.

c. Actually, the moral meaning of the law of supply and demand may be a number of different things: in fact, almost *anything* that you care to make of it.

Thus, altruists could use the law by noting that the goods they held were more valuable when they were scarce rather than when they were plentiful; and they might give them away when they held scarce goods, and then consider themselves *more* altruistic.

When Rand states that the moral meaning of the law of supply and demand means the rejection of altruism and the acceptance of selfishness, she is only stating what the meaning is to *her*. In itself, this "law" seems to have no morality about it whatever--any more than does Gresham's law of currency or any other economic law. One can define moral laws after one observes the relationships of economic facts to the society's values; but the facts themselves do not make moral rules. If Rand wants to state that the moral meaning of the law of supply and demand *should* be the total rejection of altruism, she is of course entitled to her arbitrary belief. But let her recognize that this is not its meaning to most people, nor is it (except by her fiat) its one *true and only* meaning. If she is to be objective in this claim, she must show that her logic prevails in all cases to the preferred values of all societies. Moreover, she ought to show *why* the law of supply and demand leads to the moral condemnation of altruism; and she has not done this.

d. The allegation that the law of supply and demand represents the recognition that people are not the property, or the servant of the tribe, and that they work in order to support their own life is sheer drivel. Even if we consider people the property of their tribe, the law of supply and demand would, at least to

some degree, hold true: For if the tribe had a scarcity of, say, steel, it might order people to work in a steel mill; while if it had an abundance of steel, it might order them to work at something else. The law of supply and demand tends to exist even under a collectivist society and is by no means entirely indigenous to capitalism, (though it may apply to more capitalist than collectivist events). Moreover, tribes were just a larger 'family'. The fact is that tribes flourished because individuals alone fared less well than those in a tribe.

It might be said that if, in a collectivist society, the law of supply and demand is followed on the basis of *productive* (rational) supply and *informed* demand, that society is to that degree capitalistic. Perhaps so; but only in Ayn Rand's work does *pure* capitalism and *pure* collectivism exist. In reality, all economies are and always have been, mixed. The prime examples are families (a collective) and profit sharing in companies under capitalism, and black markets under collectivism.

It is also nonsense to believe that the law of supply and demand represents recognition of the fact that people work in order to support their own lives. First of all, people need not, today, work to support their own lives since machines produce the vast majority of what we consume. Machines have freed us from manual labor and menial tasks to do things we really enjoy. The economic system today is mostly an accounting and marketing system that decides who gets what the machines make. When asked, rather than do it themselves, most people

would prefer the state trained professionals to take care of the old, the handicapped, and the very poor, practically from the cradle to the grave.

Second, even when people do not work to support their lives, the law of supply and demand still largely operates. Thus, if a mother and her child are on relief, they will be more likely to spend one hundred dollars on a television set that will bring them movies every day of the week than spend it on first-run movies at several dollars a showing; and they will be willing to pay more for a bottle of soda than for a glass of water. Their survival will hardly be affected by choosing between television and the movies or between water and soda.

e. Rand contends that a man cannot expect to receive values without trading commensurate values in return when the free market operates.

Balderdash! (i) The free market, I reiterate, is a fiction. It never has existed and it probably never will exist. (ii) People can very often, even in a so-called free market, give something that means very little to them and get something that means very much--as long as they can find other individuals who have different kinds of consumer values. Thus, for a few glass beads a savage may give a trader several pounds of gold or ivory. Or a woman can give a half hour's time to a man, enjoy sex with him, and collect a hundred dollars. On the other hand, another woman may have to work thirty-five hours or more a week at an onerous job like typing or selling in a five-and-ten cent store for a wage that enables her barely to keep her body and soul together.

f. According to Rand, the sole criterion of what is commensurate, in regard to trading values, is the free, voluntary, un-coerced judgment of the traders. This may be *her* sole criterion, but it is hardly mine, that of many others, or often even that of the traders themselves. For one thing, when a woman who dislikes typing has to type her fingers away thirty-five hours a week for a subsistence wage or else has to move into a coldwater flat, become a prostitute, or marry a man she does not care for--is her accepting the typing job really done on a "free, voluntary, un-coerced" basis? And when a working man is driven to spend considerable amounts of his hard-earned money in order to satisfy the craving for toys which television commercials have deliberately produced in his children, does he *truly* do so on the basis of his "free, voluntary, un-coerced judgment"? If Rand and her fellow objectivists think so, they are indeed naïve! The fact that no one is putting a gun to the head of the typist as she "freely" chooses her job, or is threatening the working man with a knife as he pays for his children's toys, surely does not prove that their choices are actually free, voluntary, and un-coerced.

Similarly, many or most "free" traders under capitalism are as hogtied and coerced as they can be: by their attitudes, their abilities, their biological drives, their social conditioning--and especially by the forces of the capitalist system itself. It may be contended that they might be even more coerced under another economic system, such as collectivism; but even if this is sometimes true, it does not prove that the free market and the law of supply and demand provide absolute

human freedom. To imply that they do is to be extremely misleading and certainly not objective.

The limitations of human biology and the restrictions of reality make all extremes of freedom impractical or impossible. Only by definition are Rand's capitalistic traders free, and voluntary their judgment. We see, as usual, that her entire system of "proof" is tautological, unempirical, and at least semi-theological.

9. The objectivists uphold the free market even when it leads to such results as rock singers making more money than Albert Einstein. Why? Because, Rand says, people work in order to support and enjoy their own lives--and if many find value in singing, they are entitled to spend their money on their own pleasure. Rock singer's fortunes are not taken from those who do not care for their work (I am one of them,) or from Einstein--nor do they stand in Einstein's way. Nor does Einstein lack proper recognition and support in a free society, says Rand, on an appropriate intellectual level (Rand, 1966b). This argument is unrealistic on several counts, especially when the amounts devoted to an occupation are large parts of the economy:

a. Although it seems fair that people who find value in singing, sports or gambling would be able to spend money on them, it is not true that the rock stars, sports stars, casino owners, employee's wages, and the expenditures for stadiums, casinos, advertising, accessories, etc. are not taken from those who do not care for their work. Obviously, if they produce nothing else and with the proceeds, consume considerable goods, as well as using facilities and resources that others

produce, it is very probable that those who do not enjoy their singing, sports, or gambling will have less of the world's earthly goods and services in order that the singers, casino owners, sports stars, etc. may have more of it. They will certainly have to pay a higher price since the world's resources are limited, so the law of supply and demand will drive up the prices of the remaining goods, facilities, and resources.

b. It is even more likely that the rock singers', sports stars', and casino owners' fortunes are to some degree taken from Einstein. For the 'Einsteins' of the world are usually professors who are relatively poorly paid in our capitalist society and who mainly live, directly or indirectly, on some form of public bounty. Consequently, the more rock singers, casino owners, sports stars, etc., are paid for their work, the less scientists and professors such as Einstein may be remunerated, and the higher the cost of land, equipment, and buildings for homes, schools, universities, etc. I am not saying that this is terribly unfair and horrible--for if the public freely chooses to reward rock singers, sports stars, or casino operators more than it chooses to reward 'Einsteins,' it is presumably entitled to do so but, it will have to pay the price. If, however, these people tend to give visible and immediate benefit to mankind and the 'Einsteins' tend to give the world less visible and immediate benefit, and the public shortsightedly rewards the former more than the latter, it is certainly *something* of a disadvantage for capitalism to encourage such a peculiar system of reward; and it seems silly for Rand not to have recognized this fact.

c. Although Albert Einstein may not lack proper recognition and support in a free society, on what Rand calls an appropriate intellectual level, most scientists and professors get much less publicity than he did and may not be recognized by the public at all, even though their contributions to science and humankind have been enormous. Such scientists may get intellectual recognition from their fellows (a small minority of our populace) but the public, including the intelligent reading public, hardly knows of their existence in most instances.

Rock singers, sports stars, and casinos, however, get enormous public acclaim not merely because they are in the entertainment business, but because part of their business *is* to hire high-priced publicity people to sell their names to the public. Scientists and professors who did the same--if they could afford to do so --would often be considered professionally unethical and would be censured by their professional societies. Capitalism--whether or not Rand admits it --usually favors certain kinds of popular singers and other stars not only monetarily, but also with publicity. This is not to say that people under capitalism *have* to behave the way they do; or that people under alternative systems, such as collectivism, will behave any better than they will under capitalism. But it is to say that capitalism, ideally or not ideally, encourages various important kinds of human inequities, particularly those backed by paid publicists.

10. Ayn Rand apotheosizes capitalism and ignores many of its obvious failings. Thus, she notes that the magnificent progress achieved by capitalism in a short span of time is historically supported. Moreover, its progress was achieved

by *non-sacrificial* means. Progress, she says, can come only out of *individual surplus*, i.e., from the work and energy, the creative over-abundance of capitalists who produce more than they consume. By taking their own risks, they make progress not by sacrificing to some distant future, but as part of their enjoying the living present, (1966b).

Here are some of the palpable errors of Rand's view:

a. Rand implies *only* capitalism has achieved magnificent progress in a brief span of time. But, of course, non-capitalist systems, such as those in the Soviet Union and Communist China, have also achieved magnificent progress in briefer spans of time. These systems have at times also led to more equality for women and far better health services for the entire public. Some of the political and social *disadvantages* that have accrued to the Russian and Chinese people while progress was achieved may indeed be great; but these cannot gainsay the fact that the progress was *also* achieved. Besides, capitalism--to say the least! -- also often achieves great progress at immense human cost.

b. What Rand forgets is that the "individual surplus" that she says is created under capitalism is usually *also* created by individuals depriving themselves of consumer goods in order that they may accumulate capital to invest or reinvest in their businesses. When, in the capitalist system, people become wealthy enough, and have what she calls a "creative over-abundance," they can *then* put aside capital while simultaneously engaging in a great deal of personal consumption. But few capitalists *start off* this way; and many never get to the

point where they continue to retain and add to their capital except by personal deprivation. Some capitalists begin by borrowing capital rather than saving it; but only a few can manage without considerable self-deprivation. This, of course, *is* the self-sacrifice that Rand dramatically deplures. Rand also fails to mention that huge numbers of entrepreneurs lose everything they have on their invention or new business. As said before, capitalism is like the lottery – you only hear about the winner – not the millions of losers.

c. Rand excoriates the starvation of the masses produced in the collectivist Soviet Union but ignores the following:

(i) Even in the United States, where the agricultural and other resources have been plentiful in proportion to the number of inhabitants of the country, many workers and their relatives, in both the industrial and the farming regions of the country, have often practically starved during our most prosperous times.

(ii) During periods of depression, which have so far been chronic and indigenous to capitalism, extreme poverty and near-starvation have been known by high percentages of our populace. In fact, according to Nobel Prize capitalist economist Milton Freidman, the Federal Reserve run by capitalists caused the great depression. Fortunately, we have not had any depressions for many years; but as the objectivists and most other economists admit, this good state of affairs largely resulted from the government's stimulation of the economy during a series of wars we have been involved in during that period, and a somewhat enlightened Federal Reserve policy. Moreover, in this twenty-first century, serious recession

and economic depression have occurred in America, Japan, and several other capitalist nations. High unemployment across the world has not been solved in the hundreds of years that capitalism has existed. Variations of collectivism, on the other hand, have lifted more out of poverty in one hundred years, with much greater success than early capitalism.

(iii) Just as Soviet agricultural mismanagement produced famine, so has American shortsightedness led to an immense amount of soil erosion, stripping of fertile land by poor crop growing practices, the harvesting of under-ripened eatables, and other aspects of agricultural mismanagement; which have at times forced tens of thousands of farmers to leave their land, and resulted in famine or near-famine for millions of individuals. The main ways in which these evils have been halted--as the objectivists again will be the first to admit--have been by our government's use of highly collectivized methods of agricultural subsidy and control.

It should also be noted that the industrial revolution in Western Europe caused tremendous unemployment by greatly reducing the labor needed on farms with machines. This enabled the factory owners to pay wages at or below the subsistence level, get away with abominable working conditions, and require long hours. Children and women were tied, sometimes literally, to the factory machines for seventy to eighty hours a week. These conditions continued for more than one hundred years. It was not until the social legislation of the last half of the nineteenth century that subhuman working conditions began to be

improved, and this social legislation was probably as important as any other factor in causing the improved conditions.

More recently, in our own country, until the great depression in 1929, steel workers worked seven days a week, in twelve-hour shifts, for a total of eighty-four hours per week. And until the International Ladies Garment Workers Union became a powerful force during the early years of the twentieth century, sweatshop conditions were rife in New York City and other parts of the country, and led to great evils. Without technological improvement, poor working conditions might still exist; but technological improvement is not unique to capitalism, it is also common under collectivism.

c. The objectivist contention that progress under capitalism is part of the living present and is achieved while people live and enjoy their lives, is at best a sorry half-truth. Even the most successful capitalists tend to live much more for the future than for the present and to amass huge paper fortunes, which they use in minor ways for personal consumption. Lesser capitalists tend to be even more future-oriented and have even less time and money to spend on themselves. Most capitalists are notoriously joy-deficient, in that they worry incessantly, are obsessed with their business affairs, stress themselves into early heart attacks, are often abysmally uncultured, consume for purposes of display rather than for real enjoyment, and in many other ways, are miserable tranquilizer-taking, alcohol-sipping individuals. There is no evidence that people, as a whole, are happier in capitalist, than in non-capitalist regions.

11. The psychology of people under capitalism is mainly ignored by Ayn Rand and a myth is set up in its place to the effect that these people really *want* to work hard for a living, to discipline themselves to save their money, and to produce useful products for themselves and their fellow men. "Most people," states Ayn Rand "are not moochers who seek the unearned, not even today," (1963).

What claptrap! Now that full-bodied American capitalism is a few centuries old, most people in this country are engaging in various kinds of organized and unorganized gambling; are cheating on their personal and business taxes; are padding their business expense accounts; are trying to acquire millions of dollars on the stock market (gambling really) instead of engaging in productive work; are deliberately avoiding employment and living off unemployment insurance for considerable periods of time; accepting some form of relief when they could be working; are applying for all kinds of government aids, benefits, subsidies, and grants; are holding featherbedding jobs as a result of union-management contracts; setting up restrictions which make it very difficult for others to work in their professions; selling the shoddiest of merchandise to anyone they can induce to buy it; and are manufacturing or selling foods and drugs which do more harm than good to the consumers, etc.

Ayn Rand may contend, of course, that mooching is against the spirit of capitalism and that it exists in spite of entrepreneurship. The fact remains that the spirit of capitalism is not productive work, but the acquisition of more and more

money by whatever means possible, for the least amount of effort, in spite of Rand's allegations or implications to the contrary. In its early years, capitalism was the kind of system where profits were perhaps more easily amassed by starting and operating a factory than by other means. But this is by no means true of today's capitalism. Innumerable "middle-man" businesses have grown up--such as advertising, merchandising, financing, and lobbying--and many of these businesses promise the individual much more reward at the risk of less investment than does manufacturing or agriculture. Since it is the *nature* of capitalists to seek higher incomes for minimal risk-taking and to use high-pressure selling techniques rather than high-level productivity, mooching of one kind or another has become the norm in our capitalist society; and the kind of capitalistic ideals which the objectivists preach are very rarely followed. I am not contending here that money is the root of all-evil and profit making necessarily warps people. But it certainly helps!

12. "Under capitalism," states Nathaniel Branden, "any man or company that can surpass competitors is free to do so." (1966g). This is another half-truth by the objectivists. Yes, under capitalism any individual who is able to surpass competitors *probably* won't go to jail if he arranges to do so; while, under certain forms of collectivism, he may. But under capitalism, especially as it now exists in these United States, any person who can surpass competitors is free to do so--if he can beg, borrow, or (often!) steal enough capital to work with; *if* he can sell the product he produces; *if* he can meet innumerable government regulations about

manufacturing, selling, hiring employees, and paying taxes; *if* he can somehow arrange to induce enough legislators to pass the laws he wants and repeal the laws he dislikes; *if* his products are wanted in a war or peace economy, whichever happens to exist from time to time; *if* competition from abroad, often subsidized by foreign government doesn't put him out of business; and *if* many other events that are largely out of his control do or do not occur. Capitalist production is regulated, today, from beginning to end by all kinds of important influences. Perhaps, as the objectivists contend, it shouldn't be. But it is, and it seems that it will continue to be.

I am reminded, in this connection, of the old story about the man who kept telling his friend all about the terrible traits of women. They were, he said, silly, fickle, childish, nasty, unsexy, over-talkative, and Beelzebub knows what else! "I quite agree with you," said his friend. "But don't forget they're the only thing we have in that line."

Let me agree, then, with Ayn Rand: Modern capitalism is restricted, shortsighted, politically hogtied, un-idealistic, corrupt, and hellishly "un-capitalistic." But don't forget: It's the only thing we have in that line. And it seems almost certain that this "un-capitalistic" type of capitalism or something akin to it is going to remain for some time to come. When we speak of capitalism, therefore, *this* is what we'd better be talking about. All else is a phantasmagoric dream.

13. The *inevitable* goodness and holiness of capitalism is one of the cornerstones of Randian thinking. Thus, Branden notes that capitalism, by its nature, is a constant process of motion, of growth, of progress. Under capitalism no one has a vested right to achieve. All people have the right to do better--if they can, (1967b). This is mistaken in several respects:

a. Capitalism, by its very nature (or the nature of the humans who operate under it), definitely encourages vested interests and economic stasis. Once a large corporate entity becomes established, it tends to acquire what Gaibraith calls a "technostructure," and to have all kinds of vested interests which encourage it to maintain its policies, whether or not these make for economic progress or retrogression.

Objectivists may object here that *their* kind of ideal capitalism consists only of people who are completely productive, honest, informed, rational, and physically un-coerced, and that such people would not encourage economic stasis and vested interests. But such people don't exist; and, even if they did, it is doubtful that they will long survive under any system, which even slightly resembles actual capitalism!

b. Although, under capitalism, no one has a vested right to a position *purely* because the state keeps him in power and refuses to let others take his position from him (as is often true in collectivist states), there may actually be a great deal of state power behind him which *tends* to keep him where he is. Thus, the president of a large corporation who has the ability and influence to wrangle

government contracts for his firm may remain president even though others are more capable than he is; and the owner of a neighborhood bar who bribes the local police may remain in business when more capable proprietors who do not resort to such bribery are unable to keep operating. Perhaps Ayn Rand's ideal capitalists would never resort to bribery; but many *normal* capitalists would and do! This is important since her ideal of a totally laissez-faire system would not prevent capitalists from continuing to do so, and worse. As said before, even if her ideal system was instituted for a while, it is bound to revert right back into the present system because of human nature.

c. Vested rights to a position exist under capitalism in millions of instances where no governmental control backs them up. Thus, a highly incompetent man can have a high position in a capitalist firm, and very frequently does, because, for example, he is closely related to the boss or president; or because some high-placed woman in the company is sexually attracted to him; or he is having a homosexual affair with a company official; or he knows some scandal about executives of the firm; because he is friendly with important union officials; and so on. To state, as Branden does, that "no one has a *vested right* to a position if others can do better than he can" is therefore ridiculous, unless the term "right"⁶ is used in a very limited and unrealistic manner.

14. The objectivist credo states that in a pure form of laissez-faire, free-market capitalism there would be no severe recessions and depressions. At worst,

⁶ The word "right" is derived from the word "law"; it is what the law grants; which is determined by the community and its government.

said Branden when he echoed practically all of Rand's views, the economy may experience a mild recession. Ah! But, "a temporary recession is not harmful but beneficial." Why? Because it corrects the error of the economy and brings it back to health, (1966g). Really?

There is, of course, no way to check the truth of this hypothesis, since no unregulated economy has ever existed; nor does it appear that one ever will. On theoretical grounds, however, it seems clear to practically all economists that severe economic recessions and depressions are inevitable under actual capitalism--unless drastic governmental measures are taken to prevent them. Various schemes, ranging all the way from liberal government spending and subsidizing, to strict belt-tightening in times of depression have been worked out; and some of them, at times, seem to be at least partly effective. But practically everyone except Ayn Rand and her followers seem to agree that capitalism, left to its own devices, will lead to recessions, depressions, and at times, stagnation.

The capitalist cycle can be easily outlined as: a.) Optimism, or the creation or discovery of a product, process, or service which brings new or increased sales and profits; b.) The infusion of capital and labor into that and subsequent markets by competitors to produce the same or similar goods to order to acquire those new or better profits; c.) Over-supply of those goods and services, since there is no overall plan to match production with consumption; which then results in: d.) The dropping of prices and profits; the failure of many of those businesses; the losses

of the capital invested; increased unemployment, and possible recession or depression.

Modern technology can produce so many goods that even well paid workers have difficulty consuming them. Capitalism demands ever-increasing profits. This equates to ever-increasing consumption. When humans did not have enough to survive, this was good. However, consumption levels are now so absurd that we are not really "consuming" what we produce. Our closets, garages, and storage rooms are full of things we do not use. We have multiple cars, motorcycles, boats, sporting equipment, electronics, and other toys, which, since we have so many, are, used only part of the time, if at all. Our "obsolete" computers that we can hardly give away still do the job practically as well as our new "cutting edge" ones; in the real world of limited supply, there are not enough resources for the entire world to continue the rapid expansion of consumption. Therefore, pure capitalism is bound to be impaled on one horn or the other with this consumption dilemma. In a world of diminishing resources, capitalism must eventually run out of gas, pardon the pun.

In the old days, the threats of serious unemployment and a surplus of investment capital were fairly well met by expanding domestic frontiers, the possibility of foreign investments, and the great consumption of materials and labor that occurred during major wars. But, how long will these kinds of stop-gap measures be effective and who will come to the rescue of the existing capitalist system? Periods of serious recession and depression seem inevitable, unless

special governmental (and as the objectivists would say, anti-capitalistic) controls are employed. Even the Federal Reserve—with its revered chairman, Alan Greenspan, Ayn Rand's disciple—is a collectivist, statist organization. When these controls are employed, evidence from the first few years of the twenty-first century largely shows they haven't worked.

Branden's point that temporary recessions are not harmful but beneficial is a curious one, especially when he notes that such recessions represent the curtailing of disease within the economic system. He favors some organism assailing it, following the logic that a fever is 'good' because it helps rid the body of disease. Perhaps so. But the problem of fighting disease would be far more efficaciously solved if we could eliminate the disease completely, or built the body's resources so that it was not prone to serious infection. Branden's callous attitude can be lampooned by the old joke, "What is the difference between a recession and a depression? A recession is when your neighbor is out of work. A depression is when *you* are out of work."

Similarly, instead of retaining present-day capitalism, with its tendency to overproduce goods and over-investment, then saying that recessions and depressions are "good" because they help return it to the condition of underproduction and underinvestment, it might be far more effective to redesign the system, or replace it with another system, in which overproduction and over-investment rarely occur and therefore doesn't have to be "cured" by recessions and depressions.

It should be noted that during a recession, unemployment rises and manufacturers operate their plants and equipment below capacity. Workers do not have the purchasing power to buy goods and services, and business firms do not produce all they can produce because of insufficient demand. Recession, therefore, harms both employers and employees; and it is difficult to see what real good ensues. Moreover, recession breeds mismanagement since there is a demand for jobs and goods that goes unsatisfied while the very real capacity to satisfy goes unused.

The fact is that in any reasonably unmodified form of capitalism, *general* economic planning has to be so limited that, from time to time, serious overproduction and lack of investment opportunity occurs. Since capitalists are generally secretive, in order to protect their advantages, they cannot see the whole situation. Therefore, the individuals within it can only vaguely, poorly plan. They lack clear vision or a master plan for the future, or even the best immediate response to the changing present. It is also practically certain that there will not only be many recessions but occasional serious depressions in this kind of economy.

Now, it is quite possible that, considering capitalism's other advantages and potentialities, these recessions and depressions are a relatively small price for us to pay, and that we should philosophically accept this price. But capitalism has enormous disadvantages and there is no reason to believe that ideal capitalism (a) will ever exist or (b) if it ever does, that it will not have its own disadvantages,

including wasteful consumption, overproduction, recessions, and depressions. People, even under utopian capitalism, will be fallible; and fallible people build and run fallible economic systems.

15. Ayn Rand and her objectivist comrades take an unrealistic attitude toward the hazards of economic planning and the supposedly enormous ease and automatic nature of the free market. Thus, Branden notes that in a free economy, when businessmen make an error of economic judgment, they suffer economic consequences, (1966g). But in a controlled economy, a central planner makes errors of economic judgment and therefore the whole country suffers the consequences. Some of the fairly obvious objections to this one-sided viewpoint concerning economic planning are these:

a. When entrepreneurs make an error of economic judgment, it is by no means merely they and their associates who suffer the consequences. If a capitalist is president of a large corporation, and if he decides to produce the wrong product, or use an ineffective type of sales promotion, move his factory to a region where it cannot operate well, commit some other business error, not only may he and his suppliers and purchasers suffer, but (i) he may throw thousands of people out of work; (ii) he may upset the economy of an entire community; (iii) he may help precipitate a serious recession or depression in his country; (iv) he may upset the economic balance in a huge industry; and (v) he may create all kinds of other economic, political, and social repercussions.

b. Rand and Branden's position implies that the free market works *automatically* and that economic planners have to work consciously to make good plans. Consequently, the free market requires much less work on the part of human beings and is more rational and prone to result in fewer human errors. What is false about this implication is that the free market, as Frederick Hayek and some other economists have said, does not work at all automatically but probably requires more work and worry than any other system of economics yet to be devised.

Let us see for a moment how things would really work if there were a completely free market: Mr. Jones produces, let us say, nuts and bolts, and sells them to various distributors, retailers, and manufacturers. When he first goes into business, he knows that there is a great demand for his product, and he can hardly produce enough nuts and bolts to meet this demand. So he sells them at the prevailing rate or a little higher and he makes a nice profit.

A period of time goes by and Mr. Jones increases his production of nuts and bolts. In the meantime, several other manufacturers start making a similar product and some of the older manufacturers keep increasing their production, too. Meanwhile, the number of customers for nuts and bolts increases, but not quite as rapidly as the facilities for making them have skyrocketed. So now a plethora of nuts and bolts exist, and Mr. Jones finds that he and his competitors have more than enough on hand. He has several choices: Shall he manufacture fewer nuts and bolts, (even though his overhead may remain pretty much the

same if he does)? Shall he sell his product for a lower price, (even though his manufacturing costs do not decrease)? Shall he forget about nuts and bolts and manufacture some other product instead?

How can Mr. Jones answer these questions? He can best answer them by getting a good deal of salient information--as to the inventories of his competitors, the likelihood of their going out of business, the prices they probably will be charging next season, and the general prospects for the sales of nuts and bolts in the country, etc. And since much of this information is unavailable or hard to get, Mr. Jones will have to make many guesses, and make his decisions according to these guesses. Then when some of his guesses prove to be incorrect, he will have to guess again, and make new decisions according to the new guesses. In a totally free market, mind you, Mr. Jones will not have a manufacturers' association to give him very much help, he will not be able to get together with other producers and prices; nor rely on governmental loans or subsidies; he will not have any national tariffs to protect him from cheap imports of nuts and bolts that may come from abroad, and he will have practically no help except that which comes from his own brain with the aid of employees or hired agencies.

Poor Mr. Jones! Even if he succeeds in the nut and bolt business, he has some job cut out for him! He will have to be continually checking his competitors' prices, changing his own prices every few weeks or months, entering into voluminous correspondence with his customers, exploring the raw materials market to see where he can possibly buy more cheaply, canvassing the labor

market to see if he can get better workers for lower wages, etc. For the so-called free market does not work automatically and, as we can easily see, is far from free. It only works because Mr. Jones, and millions of other entrepreneurs like him, stay awake nights, worry over prices, make innumerable guesses, worry over wages, make innumerable more guesses, spend money on all these non-productive details, and keep changing their cost and their selling prices from month to month, week to week, and even day to day.

When times are relatively good; it is still possible for Mr. Jones to make a decent profit. When times are bad, the best he can do is to minimize his losses. Mr. Jones tends to become much more frantic in his information gathering and his guessing; and if he saves his business without ending up in the nut house, he is lucky! At best, he is continually harassed and fearful; and it is unlikely that he is going to enjoy this kind of harried existence.

In view of all this concrete information-gathering, checking, rechecking, guessing, re-guessing, price-changing, wage-lowering and wage-raising, corresponding, and other operations required of Mr. Jones to keep alive in the "automatic" free market, it is no wonder that he almost always shows great enthusiasm when some plan is devised for curtailing or stopping the operations of this kind of pure capitalism! It may be pointed out to him that he can get together with "competing" manufacturers and fix prices, or that he can have a trade association or the government bind him to some kind of cost-fixing and price-fixing arrangements. As soon as this happens, Mr. Jones may be delighted to go

along with such a scheme. Without doubt, this is one of the main reasons why the free market has never really worked for any length of time, and why pure capitalism is still a myth.

Moreover, just as the producer must shop for supplies and figure out what consumers want, under Rand's capitalism, the customer must be fully informed and logical in order to buy the best product to reward the best producer. This means that the customer must travel from store to store, read labels, record prices, compare quality, spend time making a decision, and then return to the store with the best offer. None of these costs produce the product wanted. They are hidden costs of time and money as well as the accompanying anxiety that capitalism produces, yet ignores.

This does not gainsay the point made by the objectivists that a planned economy has great dangers. It does. The central planning board may err; work with the wrong information; consist of corrupt individuals; not work well with other key central planning boards; come up with decisions which are misguided and costly to the nation's economy; or it may get into many other difficulties.

It does, however, have many advantages too: It can more easily obtain relevant data than an individual manufacturer (and only has to do it one time by one team rather than many times duplicated by many competitors); it can often correct its own mistakes fairly quickly; it can make decisions which are beneficial to many people rather than to a favored few; it can see that valuable natural resources are preserved; it can replace an old technology industry with a modern,

more efficient one that would be resisted by individual capitalist owners, and so on.

What the objectivists refuse to see is that if that Mr. Jones, working as a free agent under free market capitalism, has many benefits and handicaps, the same can be said for central planning boards, whether they be run by trade associations, local governments, national states, or by world federations. *No* ideal system of free markets or national economic planning exists. Mr. Jones is not an individual hero, and a national planning board is not a collective villain; nor is a collectivist planning board heroic and Mr. Jones villainous; stated otherwise: human beings in the final analysis always do economic management. *They*, and not the “free market,” or the “collective,” or any other entity, do the actual work that is required for making industrial and marketing decisions.

The free market only works “automatically” because millions of men and women who take part in it “automatically” run to their battle stations, put on their thinking caps, and make innumerable decisions which cause prices to rise, fall, or remain stationary. The fact that people who use a free market work according to some kind of profit system may possibly help them make more rational decisions than those who work according to some other kind of economic system. But there is no reason why this *has* to be so. For when one person loses money under capitalism another luckier capitalist may make it; and neither of their decisions may be made along very practical or sensible lines, for as I said, their object is

profit-making, not the highest and best use of the economy's resources for the greatest benefit of all.

A truly "rational" system of economics, does not concern itself merely with money and the decisions that are made, but also with the human cost of making such decisions. Even if it were true that Mr. Jones and millions of his fellow producers were able to "automatically" make better decisions about buying and selling, the questions would still arise: Is it really more efficient for so many Mr. Joneses, rather than so few committee members, to spend their time deciding such matters? And, are all the headaches acquired by Mr. Jones and his fellow businesspersons in the course of the decision making process really worth it?

Of course, Mr. Jones may have nothing better to do in life than to stay up night after night worrying about the price of his nuts and bolts. Or he may actually enjoy this kind of activity and consider it a creative endeavor. Or he may feel that, if he lets a central planning committee make his economic decisions, planners will start regulating the rest of his life as well--will tell him what kind of tie he should wear, when he should eat his meals, and how often he should copulate with his wife.

So there are compensations that Mr. Jones may have if he acts as a capitalist and takes on his shoulders all the responsibilities for "automatically" abiding by the rules of the free market. But there are also enormous drawbacks. And it is these drawbacks that Ayn Rand, with her one-sided deification of pure capitalism, pig-headedly refuses to acknowledge. Not that there aren't serious

drawbacks to allowing a nation's economy to be run by civil servants, who can easily become bureaucratic, self-seeking, corrupt, unresponsive to consumer desires, and otherwise inefficient; for there certainly are such disadvantages of collectivism. Let us, unlike Rand, recognize the evils of all economic systems and not pretend that ideal capitalism would be perfect or feasible. Let us admit that a combination of socialism and capitalism may possibly produce the best we truly want to achieve.

16. Since Rand is opposed to any form of collectivism, she also is opposed to collective bargaining on the part of labor. Whereas the Marxist philosophy insists that all productivity and economic value stems from labor power, and that profit is merely the surplus value that the employer extracts from his laborers through the process of exploiting them, Rand takes the opposing view: that labor itself is worth relatively little but gains most of its value through the creative ingenuity of individual capitalists, who help it achieve its best ends. States Nathaniel Branden in this connection: A country's standard of living, including the wages its workers receive, depends on the productivity of labor. But high productivity, in turn, depends on machines, inventions, and capital investment; and these depend on the creative ingenuity of individual men. Only a capitalist system that protects the individual's rights and freedom provides these essentials, (1966g). Here are some objections to this position:

a. Both the Marxist view and the objectivist view are myopically one-sided. Yes, workers would not produce very much without machines, inventions,

and capital investment; but capitalists would not produce at all without various kinds of employees, as well as those workers who had a notable part in producing the machines, the inventions themselves, and the capital investment that they employ in their plants. The capitalist and the worker are interdependent; and under the capitalist system, one would not get very far without the other.

Moreover, the worker is the customer in the big picture. If the capitalists continue their consolidation and automation of production, there will be almost no workers – and no customers. Productivity increases will either have to be limited or most people will have to give up their work ethic.

b. The capitalists themselves are workers. They are not merely people with ideas, creative inventiveness, and an intransigent belief in rampant individualism--as Ayn Rand nobly depicts them in her novels--but are also, and perhaps more importantly, people, who work steadily at building their enterprise, who deprive themselves of all kinds of goods and pleasures in the process, and who keep plodding away to earn and to save money, and still more money. Very often, they have a minimal of creative imagination and clear-cut ideation. Often, they are imitators, buyers and stealers of others' ideas, grubby traders who make excellent use of others' inventions but who rarely think up any of their own. To be sure, they organize, direct, and take financial risks. But most of all, if they are successful, they probably work and work and work.

It should be recognized that very frequently the inventor, the innovator, and the capitalist are three different people. The inventor creates a new commodity or

technique or improves on existing goods and services. The innovator finds a way to produce and market a commodity so that there is demand for it. The capitalist mainly provides the financial backing for the entire set of transactions that includes invention, innovation, production, and distribution. In the old day the capitalist may have been an inventor and innovator as well as entrepreneur; but today is likely to be a capitalist in the literal sense of the term--an accumulator of capital who finances the business for which investors, innovators, and other individuals work. Rand's continual use of the term "capitalist" as if it were synonymous with creator, inventor, or innovator is therefore not legitimate. She refuses to acknowledge the highly uncreative, work-day activities capitalists perform most of the time.

c. There is no evidence that the creative ingenuity of individuals requires, for its exercise, a politico-economic system that protects the individual's rights and freedom. People of outstanding creative ingenuity--including composers, artists, inventors, statesmen, generals, writers, and professionals--have done marvelous work under the worst kind of despotic monarchies and dictatorial governments. People of genius, like Mozart and de Vinci, for example, worked for royal patrons. Modern rocketry was developed to outstanding heights (no pun intended!) under, first, the Nazi and then the Soviet dictatorships. It is quite probable that creative ingenuity, in the long run, tends to develop *better* under conditions of politico-economic freedom than under authoritarian regimes. But it certainly can flourish

quite well under politico-economic systems that Ayn Rand in no way tolerated (and which I, too, would deplore).

Moreover, while the economic growth of a nation is partly dependent upon the nature of its politico-economic system, it seems clear that a government can aid the growth process by doing more than merely protecting the individual's rights and freedom. For one thing, it can spend money on research development that may pay off handsomely. In our own country, for example, many billions of dollars a year are spent on research development; and the government puts much of this up through subsidies and tax incentives, thus encouraging research money spent by private industry. Much of the research development funds available are used by private industry; and a large part of America's recent economic growth seems to be both directly and indirectly attributable to this kind of government spending.

There is another confusion in Rand's philosophy. The real essence of capitalism is the direct rewarding of effort. The essence of what Rand is saying is that people only perform well when their rewards are closely tied to their efforts and not taken from them after the fact. She expands that concept to mean that there must be no control or involuntary tax on such efforts or they will cease. Yet B.F. Skinner and others proved long ago that it is the schedule of reinforcement or punishment that really matters, so that one can train an animal and some humans to work for very unprofitable, undesirable things in the long run. However, the

reverse is also true--you do not have to give them huge rewards, as capitalists would have you think. Rather, you just need to make the reward sure and fair.

Furthermore, there is no reason that rewards cannot be built into a collectivist system just as they are in the more successful corporations. If done properly, the collectivist managers would be rewarded for efficiency in their operation as well as foresight for the whole economy. For example, the manager of a buggy whip and carriage factory would be rewarded for shutting down his enterprise so that an automobile company could form in a collectivist society. In a capitalist society there will be all sorts of skullduggery, wailing, pleas to the government, and gnashing of teeth in the transition, if it takes place at all.

17. Rand takes the unrealistic attitude that humans can only be coerced by the threat of physical violence and that economic coercion itself never leads to such violence.

Typically, Branden notes that in a free, unregulated economy, from which coercion is barred, no economic group can acquire the power to victimize the rest of the population. (1966b). This is simply not true, because:

a. A free, unregulated economy does *not* bar coercion; it sanctions it. For coercion does not mean only physical force, compulsion, restraint, or constraint. It also means the use of *any* kind of power or control to force, compel, restrain, or constrain people to do something that they do not want to do. Thus, a child is coerced into being mannerly or going to school not, mainly, because his parents whale the hell out of him if he refuses, but because they level various

other sanctions--including loss of his allowance--against him if he does not comply.

In a free economy, I have the perfect right to purchase the local water reservoir, and then to force you and everyone else in town to pay almost any price I ask for drinking water. I also have the right to accumulate money, by working hard and spending little on myself; to use it to monopolize the town's real estate, grocery stores, bars, or anything else, and to force you to obey virtually any rules I set up in regard to living quarters, food purchases, or drinking liquor. Large corporations impose arbitrary rules and burdens on their employees and customers. The recent documentary "Outfoxed" shows how a single man, Rupert Murdoch, has ruthlessly tried to monopolize and pervert the news to suit his own philosophy - which is based on whose work? Ayn Rand!

In a true unregulated economy I have the right to set up huge factories in town, to poison the air with polluted byproducts, to maim you and your family members with this kind of pollution, and to deceive and confuse you with my advertising or editorials. And if you or others should try to stop me by passing town laws against my polluting the air, I can scream to the heavens that you are abrogating my inalienable right to be an individual, to use the free market, to use freedom of speech and press to push my agenda, and that you are unfairly coercing me with your nasty governmental rules!

b. Economic coercion is so pervasive and subtle that it is probably far worse than most coercion by physical violence. If you threaten me with assault or

murder in case I disobey your desires, I can at least see that you are my enemy, know what you are going to do to coerce me, and prepare some kind of counter-attack against you if I wish to do so. Even if you rule my entire community by threat of physical force, I may eventually incite a rebellion against you, or get enough citizens to fight your fire with fire and to use enough violence to subdue you and your hired thugs.

But if you gain great economic power in my community, you can more subtly rule me and the other members of the community in a variety of ways that I shall probably never quite understand and combat. Thus, you can directly and indirectly buy political votes. You can bribe me directly with money or indirectly bribe me by inviting me to your social affairs and other functions. You can coerce me by lording it over me economically and making me seem foolish in front of others unless I go along with you on various issues. You can see that I do not get or keep the kind of job I want until I do your socio-political bidding. You can encourage others to ostracize me by the economic power that you wield over them. You can direct your own or other privately owned media to praise your efforts and condemn the support for your candidates and denigrate mine. You can even make the content of "entertainment" shows subtly convince people that your way is right and good while mine is silly and bad. You can get me to think your way, and really to believe that I *naturally* think the way you do, by exerting socio-economic pressure on me to conform to your ways of thinking and behaving. You can use many other social, religious, political, media, and economic influences to

get me to do what you want me to do. Advertising is merely propaganda for business.

All this, ostensibly, is not coercion, since you do not overtly threaten to maim or kill me if I won't do your bidding. But if I believe that real force and coercion are not involved in your assault on my wishes, I am being exceptionally naïve. And, in that way, I am being brainwashed by you, the media, and by the social situation.

c. When physical constraint does occur these days, and you force me to do your bidding because I will be physically hurt or killed if I don't, it is generally economic power, which starts and makes possible the physical coercion. Thus, if you are a gangster and threaten to kill me if I don't run my business the way you want me to run it, or pay you off every week for letting me run it my way; the main reason you can get away with it is that you are using some of your ill-gotten gains to bribe the police force, to pay immoral lawyers, to buy out businesses that might unfairly compete with mine, to win social influence so that I and my family may be socially ostracized in our community, and so on.

Or if you are a police chief or the mayor of my town and you physically coerce me into paying off your henchmen or voting for you at election time, the main reason you keep your position is usually that you have economic ties with industry, with gangsters, or with other individuals that enable you to gain and keep political power. So behind your physical constraint lie very pervasive and strong economic interests.

For reasons such as these--and you can easily find similar ones if you think about this matter of physical coercion--it should be obvious that Ayn Rand takes a highly unrealistic attitude about coercion and victimization and blindly, stubbornly believes that the free market would prevent this kind of thing in the face of the overwhelming evidence that it will not.

Ironically enough, if the free market or some reasonable facsimile of it does at first exist, some bright or miserly individuals tend to save enough capital, which others have not, creating an oligopoly in capital. That oligopoly of capital begets an oligopoly of businesses. Larger enterprises need even larger amounts of capital. So capitalism always begets limited monopolies, which then become full-blown monopolies. Sooner or later, they exert distinct political-social-religious power and, through their businesses, engage in all kinds of coercion. The Republican Party under born-again Christian George W. Bush and anti-government US Representative Tom Delay in 2005, are recent examples of this. Capitalism, almost by its very nature, leads to concentrated economic power, which often encourages one person to push around others.

18. Rand and her objectivist devotees maintain the myth that capitalism, by its nature, must lead to honest dealings by businessmen and to their turning out a quality product. Says Alan Greenspan in this respect: "What collectivists refuse to recognize is that it is in the self-interest of every businessman to have a reputation for honest dealings and a quality product. Since the market value of a going business is measured by its moneymaking potential, reputation or 'good will'

is as much an asset as its physical plant and equipment," (1966b). There are several major flaws in this kind of "description" capitalism:

a. Although it is in the self-interest of *some* businessmen to have a reputation for honest dealings and a quality product, it is hardly in the interest of *every* businessman to have this kind of reputation. (i) Today, the individual businessman is hardly known to the public, since he directs a large corporation; and his personal reputation is not much at stake if his corporation practices skullduggery. (ii) Nothing succeeds like success; and most people admire the successful person *even* when he is obviously dishonest. John D. Rockefeller, Sr., as several biographers have written, engaged in all kinds of dishonest and disreputable business methods; but even before his public relations men changed his image to that of a kindly old man who doled out dimes to golf caddies and other poor people, the public seems to have admired him despite knowledge of his dishonesty. (iii) If people make *enough* money by skullduggery, they can live quite happily in spite of their poor reputation. Surely enough crooks, gangsters, bribers, thieving politicians, bookies, and other individuals who gain a disreputable living exist; and many others who are dishonest know most of them. Yet, they somehow thrive despite their poor reputations. (iv) If capitalists totally control the media, as they would under pure capitalism and largely do today in the US, they can downplay, ignore, or outright lie about them with such a loud voice that it drowns out the cries against them, as they are doing today in the 21st century.

b. As I indicated previously in this chapter, thousands of capitalists turn out shoddy goods instead of quality products, and manage to keep in business. Many of them, in fact, *only* make huge profits because of the shoddy products they manufacture and sell, while many quality manufacturers, in similar lines of industry, go bankrupt, (consider Wal-Mart). Perhaps there is *some* significant correlation between an industrialist's producing quality products and her remaining in business and making money; but it would appear to be fairly low.

On the contrary, the existing capitalist system virtually forces some individuals to produce shoddy goods if they are to stay in business--partly because, in the "free" markets we actually have, the consuming public is so easily misled and short of money that they will choose almost any product that is cheap over a higher quality one that is more expensive. The capitalist culture of buying cheap is so perverting that even the very rich waste much of their time trying to "save" money – an irrational thought since spending less on an item you do not need is not saving at all. Saving and acquiring money is an obsession to most successful capitalists. A common jibe at some of the rich: "He will spend 10 dollars in time to save 5 dollars in cash." Few capitalists view being wealthy as reason not to worry about money, and often buy shoddy goods themselves. An interesting example of this tendency of the public to purchase goods or services cheaply at almost *any* cost is shown in my own field. For years, I have noticed people who are in need of psychotherapy and who are able to afford the fees of private practitioners will do a great deal of shopping around for a cheaper practitioner or

even go to a clinic--often at inconvenient hours of the day--to save money. Such individuals often will receive most of their psychotherapy from a psychotherapeutic trainee, who is inexperienced and often relatively incompetent, *only* because by doing so they can get to see her or him at a cheaper rate. They end up, in many instances, paying more money to relatively ineffectual therapists because they have to see them much longer than they would more effective therapists--and they remain in psychological pain a much greater period of time. But because they shortsightedly look at their pocketbooks instead of their pain and the therapist's ability to help them, they foolishly go for the wrong kind of help, wasting their time and money, and ultimately extending their pain.

Although, theoretically, this would not happen under ideal capitalism--where, by some magical process, both producers and consumers of goods and services would be fully informed and be completely rational, long-range hedonists seeking balanced, rational pleasure--the chances of such an ideal form of capitalism arising, particularly when present-day capitalists fight it tooth and nail, are virtually nil. First, we'd need to have radically different kinds of humans to populate it. Then we'd have to make certain that they stayed forever incorruptible. Neither of these possibilities seems worth betting on!

c. Greenspan is naïve if he believes that the "good will" of a going business is based on its reputation or on the quality of the goods it produces. As he himself states, "the market value of a going business is measured by its moneymaking potential," and this potential is often related in a minor way to the

reputation of its owner or to the quality of its product. Even if a management is dishonest and if the business turns out shoddy goods, as long as it makes big profits, its "good will" will be high. Thus, ironically, its "good will" often directly depends on its "bad will" toward its customers and toward the public! This does not mean that this is *always* true. For, as Greenspan later points out, a drug company may lose reputation and acquire very bad will if it turns out a shoddy or dangerous product. But another company may not!

19. Ayn Rand claims that, because people apply knowledge and effort, they have an absolute right to own the thing they apply it to. Thus, she says that all materials and resources that are useful and that require effort should be private property--by the rights of those who apply the required effort. Broadcasting frequencies should especially be private property, because they are produced by human action and do not exist without it. In nature, only the potential and the space through which those waves must travel exists. (1966b). This is pretty crummy thinking, for these reasons:

a. Virtually any material element or resource that requires the application of human knowledge and effort to make it useful not only requires an individual's but *many people's* application. Thus, although Marconi invented the wireless, many other inventors had to add to it before it became the modern radio and TV system; and many other inventors had to work at producing wires, condensers, coils, and TV tubes before their imaginings could be actualized. Even the *knowledge* that Marconi and other inventors of radio-TV systems employed to

create their ideas and conceptions had to be worked on, refined, and taught to them by others. Isaac Newton acknowledged this when he accepted his famous appointment, stating: I stand here today only because I stand on the shoulders of so many great men who came before me.

Indeed, the whole concept of the self-made person is ludicrous. First, we are totally dependent on others as babies. Second, language, math, literature, organizational and management principals, laws, etc. that we all must use in our pursuits, were given to us. Moreover, living alone or in a small, independent society would dramatically impair ones ability to care, defend and fend for oneself. If one were truly a self-made and self-sustained person, one would have to do everything alone. That equates to poverty since one would be very busy surviving without time to produce or enjoy luxuries.

So the notion that the individual inventor, just because she applies human knowledge and effort, has a *full* right to her invention, seems one-sided. Presumably, she has a *partial* right, perhaps even a large one, to her "property" in the invention; but other people, including her culture (not to mention her teachers, the authors of the books she has read, etc.), might legitimately have *some* property right in her invention, too.

b. Although it is true, that which exists in nature is only the potential, and the space through which broadcasting waves must travel, it does not follow that *therefore*; the person who first discovers them should own these waves. We could perhaps contend that *if* private property must exist, one good way of

deciding ownership is to award the property to the individual who *first* discovers it. But we could also say, "Oh, no! The individual who first *settles* on the discovered land; or who first *develops* it properly; or who finds some *outstanding* use for it-- he should be the one who owns it." Or we could say that the individual who is the *fifth* owner of a piece of land would *therefore* own it forever and be able to will it to his heirs; while the first four owners should only temporarily own it.

All property "rights," in other words, are arbitrarily given the owner, by some definition--by some *agreement* among people. A single individual, as Ayn Rand and her followers see things, may relate this agreement, to the application of human knowledge and effort; or it can, according to the way others see it, be related to other criteria. It is also possible for people to agree, at any given time and place, that there be *no* private ownership of property. This kind of collectivism, where the community alone owns property and individuals do not, may prove to be inefficient for many purposes; but that does not prove that it is an *evil or immoral* system of property ownership, since for some important purposes such as water supplies, parks, and army bases, it has been proven superior. That Rand can see only *one* possible method of "justly" or "rightly" assigning property rights is, once again, an indication of her monolithic, absolutist-oriented views.

Just as Rand and other objectivists see that individuals who apply themselves to discovering and developing property should "rightfully" own it, so do they insist that patents and copyrights are the legal implementation and basis of

all property rights: a person's right to the product of his mind (Rand, 1966b). Here again, they forget that the man whose mind works out a patented or copyrighted idea invariably leans on innumerable other men, from the past and in the present, from whose efforts he partially derived this idea; and that even if he completely got it out of his own head--which is almost inconceivable--his society would still have the "right" to insist that part or all of the property rights in this idea belong to the community.

This, in fact, is what normally happens under capitalism. An individual who works for a large company invents a machine or a process, and the firm she works for insists that, because she is paid a salary by it, all or some of the property rights in this invention should go to the company. By the same token, society could insist--and, mind you, I am not saying that it should--that just because it nurtures a human for all of her life, and then enables her to exist by some kind of activity, she owes all or part of the property rights in her inventions to it.

Rand's absolute thinking that people have a complete right to the product of their mind, only makes sense by definition: because she insists that it makes sense. It may be, on pragmatic grounds, possible to prove that both the individual and society will benefit more by awarding inventors property rights in their inventions than by awarding such rights to others. But even if this were proved--which, as yet, has definitely not been--a community could still legitimately (though perhaps not too sanely) agree that property rights in inventions are to be shared rather than solely given to the inventor. In

contradiction, Rand advocates force so people will not use inventions or copyrights. In a truly laissez-faire system, no businessperson could enforce his patent rights.

20. Rand, when she faces the fact that laissez-faire or pure capitalism does not exist and most probably never will, refuses to face the true reasons for its failure to flourish. She rationalizes as follows: Why has capitalism been destroyed in spite of its incomparably beneficent record? She answers: Cultures have a dominant philosophy and capitalism never had a philosophical base. It was the last and (theoretically) incomplete product of an Aristotelian influence. Its moral nature and its political principles have never been fully understood or defined. Even its defenders think it compatible with government controls, ignoring the (sacred!) meaning and implications of "laissez-faire." Only mixed capitalist economies have existed since the nineteenth century, and its controls necessitated and bred further controls. The statist element of this mixture wrecked pure capitalism, and its free, capitalist element took the blame, (Rand, 1966b). This statement is misleading in several respects:

a. The capitalism that Rand says was destroyed in spite of its beneficent record apparently never existed. Even *early* capitalism was far from laissez-faire; and, as we noted previously in this chapter, Rand and the objectivists themselves freely admit that pure capitalism never existed.

b. Rand's "incomparably beneficent record" of early capitalism is another myth. Not that it did not have a reasonably good record *in some respects*, it did.

But, as Karl Marx and many other critics, including pro-capitalist critics, have shown, early capitalism had many, many abuses, in terms of its exploitation of labor, its turning out of poor products, its unethical practices, its destruction of the environment, its encouragement of wars, and other deficiencies.

c. Virtually any system of economics or politics has a philosophical base; people make certain rules because they *believe*, on some basis, that x is good and y is bad.

Capitalism arose, fairly obviously, because people believed that an individual was capable of running a business, of determining whether he would make a profit or loss, of taking risks, of helping the general system through helping him, etc. If everyone had believed that people were incapable of doing anything on their own and that they had to make collective judgments about everything, it is hard to imagine capitalism arising. Adam Smith was the first “worldly” philosopher to support capitalism. It is ironic that Smith was, in reality, a pragmatic socialist. He decried the conditions of his day but accepted the reality that, for his times, capitalism was the lesser of evils available. So capitalism always *has* had some kind of philosophical base, even though capitalists and their antagonists may not have been quite aware what this base was.

Money is the real philosophical base of capitalism. Without money there can be no capitalism. Money, however, is not real--it is merely a symbol--of a debt owed to the possessor for labor, goods, and/or materials. The actual functions of capitalism are the lending or investing of money in hopes of receiving more

money. Capitalism's unwritten philosophical base is that individuals do the gathering of fruits, vegetables, etc. or the actual killing of game. However, the individual, his family, and his tribe were better off when they worked as a group. So the collectivist state (family, tribe, and hunting party) and the capitalist state (you get to eat first if you kill it or find it first) have always been inextricably intertwined. Capitalism also arose from the observation that the tribe as a group did not have the time or the ability to manage every individual. The group had the obvious disadvantage that the tribe's leaders would frequently make mistakes or abuse their power to better themselves at the expense of the group. Hence, the mistrust of power and the state arose early. Moreover, since some people thrived in the lending and investing of money, they and their family were conspicuously alive and well and people tended to copy what they saw as success. Thus, Ayn Rand's real philosophical base and its opponent philosophy were endemic to human nature and social structures.

d. According to Ayn Rand and her group "a resurgent tide of mysticism engulfed philosophy in the 19th century" (Rand, 1966b), but this is a peculiar view. Actually, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth saw the rise of logical positivism, empiricism, pragmatism, and other highly non-mystical (or less mystical) philosophies than had previously existed. Only Rand and the objectivists see these views--because they disagree with them--as "mysticism."

e. Assuming that the moral nature and political principles of capitalism had never been fully understood or defined, there is no evidence that it *therefore* declined. It is much more likely that the philosophy of capitalism--that the individual, through a laissez-faire economy, could make maximum profit and help humanity most--was found wanting *in practice*; that it did not work; and that consequently a freer kind of capitalism declined into a more controlled variety.

Rand insists that government controls necessitate and breed further controls, and she may be right. But she fails to see that "pure" capitalism soon will probably become so chaotic and one-sided that *it* will breed controls, including government controls; and this seems to be an almost inevitable consequence of just about any kind of capitalism. It was not necessarily, as she alleges, "the statist element." Rather, it was probably the free, capitalist element that led to the statist element, and eventually caused what she considers to be the holocaust of mixed economies.

Included in Rand's objectivist views on economics are many contradictions. Although objectivism is presumably a most rational and logical set of principles, in actuality it is not. Some of its inconsistencies in regard to capitalism are these:

1. Ayn Rand insists that since values are established contextually, all people must judge for themselves, in the context of their own knowledge, goals, and interests, (1966b). Since values are determined by the nature of reality, it is reality that serves as their ultimate arbiter: if people's judgment is right, the

rewards are theirs. If it is wrong, they are their only victims. This is rather contradictory gobbledygook on a number of counts:

Human values are established contextually: with individuals relating *with* their environment and reacting to it. The context, therefore, is *not* merely their “knowledge, goals, and interests,” but their knowledge, goals, and interests as partly determined by the culture in which they live, by their biological inheritance, and by various other factors.

It may be reality that serves as men’s ultimate arbiter; but reality *includes* the person. Therefore, again, it is an *interaction* between individuals and the reality in which they live that serve as their ultimate arbiter. Interactions and transactions seem foreign to Ayn Rand’s mode of thinking.

If a person’s judgment is right, the rewards are not only his or hers; they are for their community as well. And if it is wrong, the wrongdoer is *not* necessarily the only victim; many others may also suffer.

Rand seems to hold, at least implicitly, two contradictory creeds: (i) people are the only creators of their own values; (ii) systems, such as capitalism and collectivism, create values, which impose themselves on people. Actually, when one understands the dualistic or pluralistic nature of things, both these propositions may be true. But Rand does not appear to uphold a dualistic view; and yet she and objectivism cannot sustain a monolithic, un-contradictory view either.

2. Nathaniel Branden points out that the essence of the social system Ayn Rand advocates, the system derived from her ethics, is contained in a single principle: "*No man--or group of men--may seek to gain values from others by the use of physical force.*" (1965b). However, as I have shown earlier in this chapter, the capitalist system is precisely that system of economics that does give one person enormous power, both physical and propagandistic, over other people, and that clearly encourages the use of several kinds of force to enable an individual to gain and to keep economic power. Also, she advocates a state, and force by that state to protect patents and copyrights. This is the main difference between her and "libertarians," who are really anarchists with the even more unrealistic wish that there be no government at all. This ignores the fact that there are governments everywhere that would soon impose themselves on them. How Rand or the Libertarians can endorse any large element of capitalism and *not* encourage the use of physical and other coercive force is quite a question!

3. Ayn Rand keeps contradicting herself as to whether or not free capitalism exists and whether or not un-free capitalism is good. She insists that capitalism, in her sense of the term, is only an ideal that has never existed; but then takes existing capitalism, which she presumably abhors, and insists that *it*, with all its horrors, is much better than statism or collectivism, and presumably even good in its own right. Thus, Rand noted that the differences between the superior productivity and speed of economic progress in West and East Berlin in

the 1960's indubitably showed that collectivist East Berlin was inferior to capitalist West Berlin, (1964). Rand's thinking is poor for these reasons:

a. Both capitalism and socialism are really forms of *state* capitalism and *state* socialism, and are hardly entirely different from each other, as Rand implies that they are.

b. Even if socialism in East Berlin in the 1960's did not match the output of contemporary capitalism in West Berlin that would hardly answer the question of any comparisons between capitalism and socialism "once and for all," as Rand states. At most, it would answer the question with those particular people, in that place, and time.

c. Oddly--or not so oddly--enough, since this passage was published by Ayn Rand in 1964, productivity and speed of economic progress made great gains in East Berlin; and, reports tend to show that the building of the brick and mortar and steel wall between the two sections of the city by the East Berliners was one of the main factors in the economic progress of the eastern half of the city. Physical force, in other words, did partly pay off--in spite of Rand's theory that, economically, at least, it never does!

d. Additionally, she ignores the fact that the US and NATO poured huge amounts of capital into Berlin that would not have gone there under traditional capitalism since capitalists abhor making non-government guaranteed investments in war zones. The fact that at the height of the cold war billions were being poured

into a city completely surrounded by tanks, rockets, and troops of the communists is proof that massive state intervention *and* capitalism greatly benefited the city.

4. If the objectivist position in regard to capitalism were half as sound as objectivists think it is, we would presumably tend to have (a) universal capitalism and (b) pure laissez-faire. Nathaniel Branden, for example, notes that the great merit of capitalism was that it uniquely aids human survival and people's need to grow. It leaves people "free to think, to act, to produce, to attempt the untried and the new." It rewards effort and achievement, and penalizes passivity, (1964a). This statement leads one to ask:

a. If capitalism is so uniquely appropriate to the requirements of human survival, why should Ayn Rand and her associates have to keep beating the drum in its favor? Obviously, it should win out completely on its own.

b. Why, if capitalism is so beneficial, do capitalist nations such as the United States modify the system so extensively that true believers in capitalism, such as Randians, can hardly recognize it as such? Why doesn't the United States economic system become more and more, instead of less and less, capitalistic?

c. If the principles of capitalism operate in a way that rewards effort and achievement and that penalizes passivity, why do capitalists try to get away from its pure state and why do they passively go along with the intrusion of so much governmental control over the capitalist system? Can it be that people are *naturally* more passive than active, that therefore they do *not* get along too well under capitalism, and that *consequently* they adopt non-capitalist goals such as

the welfare state, government subsidies for industry, agreements between management and labor unions?

Irrelevant arguments of Randians. The objectivists, who again are supposed to be so logical in their appeals, ceaselessly repeat irrelevant arguments in favor of capitalism and against any form of collectivism. Here are a few of their irrelevancies.

1. John Galt, in his famous speech in Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* gives this typically weak objectivist argument: What determines the material value of people's work? Nothing but the productive effort of their minds. If people lived on a desert island, their brains would think less efficiently, the less their physical labor would bring them, and they could spend their life on a single routine, collecting a precarious harvest or hunting with bow and arrows, unable to think any further. But by living in a rational society, where people are free to trade, they receive an incalculable bonus: the value of their work is determined not only by their effort, but by the effort of the best productive minds who exist in the world around them.

This is a great argument in support of the notion that if you work in a factory or in a social group you will normally derive more benefits than if you work in isolation--for, as Rand notes, you may then benefit from the productivity of others. This fact, however, has virtually nothing to do with capitalism or the free market; the same thing is true in a collectivist society. Even a highly efficient worker in a collectivist nation benefits more from working for the government than

from working entirely for himself. As Rand says, the material value of his work is partly determined not only by his effort, but by the effort of the best productive minds who exist in the nation around him, (1957).

2. By the same token, of course, a physician who works with other physicians will benefit from their efforts as well as from his own; and Nathaniel Branden in a vehement argument against socialized medicine, forgets this point, (1965b). It may indeed be somewhat unfair for a good physician to be remunerated in exactly the same way as is a poor physician, when medicine is socialized. But if there were *no* socialization of medicine whatever, from medical school to hospital and clinical work, probably *no* physician would be very competent--nor perhaps would she have many patients left to pay her!

3. Along somewhat similar lines, we have the irrelevant argument of Ayn Rand against socialized medicine. Says Rand: Gigantic achievements of American medicine "were created by men who were *individualists* and *egoists* in the highest sense of these words," people of unusual ability, judgment, ambition, and courage, the courage to be innovators. The implication here is that collectivist medicine has no achievements; and that in the collectivist nations there are no physicians of unusual ability, of independent judgment, ambition and courage, including the courage to be innovators, (1963). This, of course, is absurd. It is certainly possible that a collectivized system of medicine will eventually produce *fewer* fine physicians and *fewer* medical achievements than a capitalistic system of medicine. But there is no evidence, as yet or likely in the future, that this is true.

4. Nathaniel Branden insists that, like every form of progress, economic progress has only one ultimate source: "man's *mind*--and can exist only to the extent that man is free to translate his thought into action." (1966g). The implication, once again, is that only under capitalism can economic pioneers, creators, and inventors exist. Obviously, economic pioneers, creators, and inventors existed as slaves, under feudalism, and in collectivized communities. Quite probably, political freedom *aids* inventiveness; and quite possibly, capitalism (or some reasonable facsimile) aids political freedom. But it is silly to down human creativity under *any* kind of economic system; and it is presumptuous to contend that it can *only* flower under ideal capitalism.

5. Ayn Rand contends that if a government holds economic control, it has to create a special "elite," an "aristocracy of pull." It will attract the corrupt type of politician into the legislature, will work to the advantage of the dishonest businessman, and will penalize and destroy honest and able people, (1966b). While this statement may be partly true, there is every reason to believe that it applies as much to "free capitalism" as to state capitalism or to collectivism. For special "elites" have easily existed in all societies; and it is probably more likely that they will be uncontrolled under "free capitalism" than under government controlled economies, where there are likely to be restrictions on them.

Rand's point that, when the government holds the power of economic control, honest and able individuals will eventually be completely destroyed, is a gross exaggeration. Honest people may well be handicapped when a corrupt

politico-economic system exists; but able individuals, instead of being destroyed, often wind up running the system.

Strawmanism. This leads us logically into our next heading—strawmanism. As I shall show later in more detail, Randians have a remarkable penchant for setting up straw-men, by claiming that their opponents believe in all kinds of things in which they really do not believe, and then enthusiastically knocking down these setups. They do this in the realm of economics as they do in most other realms. For example:

1. Ayn Rand has John Galt exclaim in *Atlas Shrugged* (1957): “Were we supposed to want to work for the love of our brothers? What brothers? For the bums, the loafers, the moochers we saw all around us?” This statement has at least three major strawmen in it: (a) It is assumed that, under collectivism, all men are supposed to work only for the love of their brothers. This, of course, is nonsense. Collectivists work mainly for themselves; but they believe--whether rightly or wrongly--that they will help themselves by working cooperatively and collectively rather than by working individually. They are by no means pure altruists--except in the distorting eyes of Ayn Rand! (b) Certainly, many people shirk under collectivism--as, of course, they do under capitalism and any other economic system that has yet been devised. Some of them shirk because they are “lazy”; others are emotionally disturbed; others are relatively incompetent and are afraid to compete with more competent individuals; and still others have different reasons for their indolence and escapism. But the objectivists

pejoratively label all of these shirkers as “bums,” “loafers,” and “moochers”-- implying that they are only out to exploit the industrious workers and producers, and that they should be totally condemned for being what they are. (c) Rand implies that these people are hopelessly evil and cannot change. She dehumanizes them so she can justify leaving them to die along the road or be cast into prison for being the pure evil she contends they are. If her ideas are great, then she should have a realistic, step-by-step method to cure these “loafers”, etc. Instead she implies that they are evil or hopeless from birth. What Rand is really advocating is the death of all those that oppose her; social Darwinism based on a person’s abilities in capitalism.

2. Rand holds that the rank injustices toward racial or religious minorities are specifically practiced toward businessmen. For instance, condemning some men and absolving others, without a hearing: Today’s ‘liberals’ consider a businessman guilty in any conflict with a labor union, regardless of the facts or issues involved, and boast that they will not cross a picket line ‘right or wrong.’ Consider the evil of judging people by a double standard and of denying to some the rights granted to others. “Liberals” recognize workers’ (the majority) right to their livelihood (their wages), but deny the businessmen’s (the minority’s) right to *their* livelihood (their profits), (1966b). Again, we have several exaggerated accusations here and Rand demonstrates her own “racism” towards people who do not completely agree with her:

a. It is assumed that a class of "liberals" exists today, and that all individuals who think of themselves as "liberal" are one hundred per cent opposed to businesspersons and ceaselessly condemn and persecute them. On the face of it, this is a type of "racism" lumping together all "liberals" as the same and asserting that they are less desirable than objectivists. Ironically enough, most of the "liberals" that Rand talks about are or aspire to be businesspeople (i.e., proprietors, doctors, lawyers, psychologists, professors who consult with industry). And most of them are opposed to *some*, but hardly *all*, the practices of businesspersons.

b. It is surely something of an absurd exaggeration to imply that businesspersons in the United States, at the present time, are being persecuted in exactly the same way, as have been Negroes in the Deep South, Jews in Nazi Germany, and businesspersons during the years of the Soviet revolution in Russia.

c. There is no evidence that many American "liberals" incessantly condemn businesspersons and uphold workers' rights regardless of facts. Liberal newspapers and periodicals, for example, uphold labor unions in one dispute and uphold management in another dispute--or change from one side to the other in the course of a single dispute. And "liberals" frequently condemn labor unions for their racketeering, ultra-conservative policies, inefficiency, for their political ties, and for many other things.

d. Most "liberals" give both businesspersons and labor a hearing and weigh the facts involved before they make up their minds on a given issue. This,

largely, is why we call them “liberals”: because they do consider the issues involved in a dispute, do change their minds frequently, and do engage in all kinds of compromising in their views. The monolithic, bigoted “liberals” of whom Rand writes are largely figments of her romantic imagination.

3. Nathaniel Branden insists that all collectivists or socialists are pure altruists who *only* put the collective good above individual good; and he favorably quotes Joseph Goebbels in this respect: “To be a socialist is to submit to the thou; socialism is sacrificing the individual to the whole.” (1965b). This, again, is errant strawmanism.

Most collectivists are rather individualistic in their ultimate goals. Marx and Engels believed that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be only temporary; and Lenin wrote that, once socialism was well established, there would be no need for the state at all, that it would wither away. Collectivists believe, right or wrong, that the people will greatly benefit from socialization of the means of production and that they will have *more* economic gains and political rights as a result of this socialization. And although these collectivist ideals have by no means been realized as yet, it can also be said, under capitalism, people have had exceptionally little economic individualism or political freedom.

In some instances, moreover, socialistic communities have preserved the I-thou relationship and the rights of the individual to a considerable degree. Thus, in our own country in the middle of the nineteenth century, there were several communistic societies, such as Brook Farm and the Fourier-inspired communities,

where economic collectivism and rampant individualism seemed to blend fairly nicely. In the main, collectivist inclined people tend to believe in a philosophy which is a blend of socialism and individualism, of enlightened self-interest and community spirit; and they are quite unlike the strawmen whom the objectivists accuse them of being.

3. In their campaign against socialized medicine, Rand and the objectivists go to pejorative extremes of accusing their opponents of all kinds of trickery and predicting disaster in case any vestige of legislation favoring socialized medicine passes. Thus, in the early stages of the campaign against our federal and state governments setting up Medicare plans, Leonard Peikoff said in the *Objectivist Newsletter* (1962), that those who attempt to convert a free country into a dictatorship have to move gradually. The Kennedy administration wrote letters to newspapers and petitions to Congress in support of Medicare. The American Medical Association also had a similar campaign in defense of doctors. No one who values freedom should remain silent.

Note the allegations that setting up a Medicare plan in the United States will lead to a "totalitarian dictatorship;" that it will result in the demise of countless Americans; and will blot our individual freedom. As far as I know, we do not yet have a totalitarian dictatorship in this country; our lives are not in great jeopardy (indeed, because of better medical care for the indigent, some of this jeopardy has been removed!); and, prior to Patriot Acts 1 and 2 which were proposed by the capitalist Republican Party, we seemed to have just about the same amount of

individual freedom as we had when President Kennedy was still alive. How could this happen if Rand was correct? Indeed, today we see the capitalists taking our freedom of the press under the guise of free enterprise.

Although socialized medicine would appear to have definite drawbacks, Rand and the objectivists fail to point out that unregulated, capitalist-inspired medicine also has its distinct disadvantages. Thus, the American Medical Association, which is somewhat akin to the National Association of Manufacturers in that it protects the interests of individual medical entrepreneurs, has restricted the output of new doctors in this country by opposing plans for new medical schools. By limiting the number of physicians per capita in the nation, it encouraged the setting of medical fees at an artificially high level. "Free" medicine in the United States has provided excellent care for lower income and upper income groups, but fees have been semi-prohibitive for many middle-class people in our population.

Another problem objectivism fails to solve is the earnings gap dilemma. As doctors earn more and more money than their unskilled counterparts, they need richer and richer patients or to work longer and longer hours or to give less and less care to each patient. With socialized medicine, the doctor may not become a millionaire, but he will have plenty of patients and be fulfilling his oath of service rather than playing golf in hopes of seducing a new rich patient to pay his high rates. If a doctor is only doing his job for the money, I would not want him for my doctor. Again, Rand monolithically believes that the only motivator of people is money.

Tautological premises. Most of, the philosophical basis of Rand's objectivism seems to be tautological thinking. This is not so unusual, since most 'isms' are based, at bottom, on pure definitions; and the propositions, which they hold to be "true", are only true because they say they are. Rand's objectivism, however, claims that it is both rational and empiric: that its tenets are true because they ultimately relate to reality, to the way things are, and are therefore observably connected with the facts of human behavior and of the world. One might therefore expect that objectivism would not be fundamentally tautological or definitional.

But it is! Its general tautological premises will be examined later in this book. Here let me point to some of the tautological thinking in Rand's economic philosophies.

1. The philosophic core of objectivism's capitalistic credo seems to be incorporated in this section by Ayn Rand There is no such thing as "a right to a job"--only the right to free trade exists. A person has a right to take a job if another person chooses to hire him. The "right to a home" doesn't exist--only the right of free trade and the right to build a home or to buy it. Only those who choose to have a "fair" wage or a "fair" price have the right to pay it, hire someone, or to buy his product. Only the right to manufacture milk, shoes, movies, or champagne exists because producers choose to manufacture them and no one has the right to manufacture them oneself. There are no "rights" of special groups--of farmers, of workers, of businessmen, of employees, of employers, of

the old, of the young, of the unborn. There are only *the Rights of Man*--rights possessed by every individual man and by *all* men as individuals," (1964). This is a tautological statement for several reasons:

a. It is laudable for Ayn Rand to try to track down the rights of people to rights possessed by every individual person and by all people as individuals--since that would at least give us a consistent basis for human rights. But how *can* there be such universal rights except by definition? As noted before, the root of "right" is "law", so rights are merely what the society chooses, not mandates from the gods or nature. The one "inalienable" right that most everyone agrees on is a person would seem to have is the right to live. But even that can be legitimately abrogated: as when John kills Jim because Jim is attacking him and may possibly kill John; or when a group of individuals band together to protect its homes and lands from outside invaders; or when a government's army fights against the army of another government. So even the human right to live is not completely unconditional and inalienable.

b. For every single human to have *exactly* the same basic rights would probably mean for all of us to be truly equal in ability, age, strength, moneymaking propensity, etc. For if you are very bright and strong and capable and I am very stupid and weak and incompetent, and we both theoretically have the same "right" to produce and sell goods, is the equality of this "right" really meaningful? Will you not, *because* of your superior abilities, invariably have the

“right” to put me out of business while I, conversely, have little “right” to out produce and outsell you?

c. If all people have, to begin with, equal rights, what happens as soon as some of them gain friends and allies and some do not? If Jones, because he has blue eyes and blond hair, or because he was born into a friendly family, gains many friends during the course of his life; and Smith somehow gains very few, is Smith’s “right” to compete with Jones for the socio-economic favors of others going to do him much good?

d. Ayn Rand is correct about there being no such thing as “a right to a job”--unless people, in a given community, *agree* upon this right. There is no reason why anybody should, ought, or must be entitled to work when they are able-bodied. But if the people of any community hold that all able-bodied people are entitled to work and that none of them should be discriminated against (because they are stupid, incompetent, or anything else) then these rules *give* the individual the right to a job in this community. Of course if the community cannot create the jobs, that right is moot. This right is not fate-given or God-given; it is clearly people-given. And it can always be changed at different times and places.

By the same token the “right of free trade” is people-given, too! Ayn Rand seems to believe that it is the essence of nature or humanity for the right of free trade to exist; but it palpably isn’t. If people, in a given community, *wish* to run their economic lives by the principles of free trade, they can make such rules; and, after these rules have been passed, individuals in this community *then* have the

right of free trade. But not simply because they are human, because they are alive, or because free trade is indubitably good. These may be good reasons why a community passes free trade rules. But unless it does pass such rules, people's "right" to engage in free trade is nonexistent and may easily be abrogated.

If Rand is talking about moral right, she is still only definitionally asserting, in a moral sense, that people have no right to a job but do have "the Rights of man"--whatever that may be. By similar definition, one could say exactly the opposite, and could call almost any human right moral, immoral, or non-moral. Since "moral" merely means what is best for the community in the long run, to assert that her principals are best in the long run requires proof that she cannot give since her system, by her own admission, has never existed at all. To assert one's policy is good because it is good is tautological and religious in nature. If any inalienable moral rights exist, no one, including Rand, unequivocally has shown what they are.

e. All human "rights," then, including the "rights" to enjoy a fair wage, to receive a fair price, to consume goods are conditional, limited, and self-imposed--as long as people live in social groups. For these rights are *group* rules. It is clearly the group that "gives" rights to the individual and can take them away. For Rand and her objectivist followers to set up as "true" and inalienable the one particular "right" which we call the "right of free trade" is patently definitional -- merely an assertion, not a proof. Alfred Korzybski would have called that claim an arrant overgeneralization! In his view, Rand and the objectivists would be

“unsane” since they are ignoring reality in choosing a fanciful universe, (Korzybski, 1933).

When Rand says that humans are human because they “possess the unassailable right of free trade,” she really means, “Because I, Ayn Rand, say you possess the unassailable right of free trade and are human because of it.” She can muster no empirical evidence why you *must* have this right (although she may present some evidence that it would be desirable if you did have it). Therefore, she really is tautologically stating: “You have the right of free trade because you have the right of free trade.” Similarly, all the other basic economic “rights” which she insists that people possess have no basis in objective fact or logic.

2. Rand *defines* all the disadvantages of capitalism as being caused by non-capitalistic governmental control. Thus, she states that according to historical facts, all the evils popularly ascribed to capitalism were caused, necessitated and made possible, *only* by government controls imposed on the economy. (1961b). Check the facts and you will discover whether or not free trade of government controls was responsible for the alleged iniquities of capitalism. When you hear that capitalism has had its chance and failed, remember that what ultimately failed was a “mixed” capitalist economy. Controls caused its failure. We can save only save capitalism by not forcing it to swallow a full, “unmixed glass of the poison which is killing it.”

This is ridiculous for several reasons:

a. Rand holds that pure capitalism has never existed, but only a “mixed” capitalist economy; and yet she dogmatically states that *all the evils* in this “mixed” economy were caused, necessitated and made possible *only* by the non-capitalistic parts of the mixture. She *presumes* that the evils in a mixed capitalist economy are necessarily caused by the controlled or “non-capitalistic” elements of this economy.

b. Rand does not even consider the *possibility* that capitalism itself causes evils, and that non-capitalist controls may ameliorate these evils. She says we should check the facts and discover which of the two opposite political principles--free trade or government controls--was responsible for capitalism’s alleged failure. But she presents no facts.

c. Ayn Rand seems to mean that capitalism is good because it is good and that government control is bad because it is bad. She states that a mixed glass of poison is killing capitalism and that the poison is government control. Why? Well, because she claims that the poison *is* governmental control.

d. Rand’s complete syllogism seems to be: “Capitalism is entirely good and government control is entirely bad; contemporary capitalist economy has a considerable amount of government control mixed in with pure and holy capitalism; therefore anything that is wrong with contemporary capitalism must be in the government controls which made it into an unholy mixture.”

e. The claim could just as easily be made by communists: When you hear that collectivism has had its chance and has failed, remember that what ultimately

failed was a “mixed” world economy. Not enough controls caused its failure. We can save only save collectivism by not forcing it to swallow a full, “unmixed glass of the poison which is killing it.”

3. Rand’s view of money is quite definitional and almost entirely divorced from reality. Thus, her hero, Francisco d’Anconia states in *Atlas Shrugged*, “The code of good men is to trade by means of money. But money rests on the axiom that every man is the owner of his mind and his effort,” (1957). If you have money, no power can prescribe the value of your effort except the voluntary choice of people who are willing to trade you their effort. Only money permits you to obtain for your goods and your labor products that you want from others. Only deals that are mutually beneficial by the unforced judgment of the traders are permitted by money.

More assertions! Real fiction! In fact, just as it has been said that Ayn Rand’s novels read like non-fictional philosophic tracts, it could even more justifiably be said that her non-fictional writings read like romantic fiction! Some tautological, anti-empirical statements in the above quotations are these:

a. People of good will may or may not trade by means of money, since there are various other ways they can trade. Ayn Rand apparently *posits*, however, that if you trade by money you are, by that very fact, a person of good will. By definition, rather than by any empirical evidence, she makes trade and good will equivalent.

b. Money certainly does *not* rest on the axiom that every person is the owner of his mind and his effort. Money is merely paper or metal with a symbol that represents labor and/or materials for which you can trade it. It is used because it is easier to trade by means of money than by means of barter, and because it is often more efficient to use money than to try to exchange goods directly for services.

c. The axiom that all people are the owner of their mind and effort is purely definitional and unrelated to reality. Actually, every human seems to learn and to think and to gain from his work largely through the collaborative and cultural help of others.

d. Perhaps in a free market of productive (that is, angelic) traders, money allows no power to prescribe the value of your effort except the voluntary choice of the person who is willing to trade you his effort in return. But under *real* capitalism you can use money for barter and still coerce another into trading with you, and doing so to his disadvantage, because you threaten him physically, blackmail him, refuse to approve of him, or otherwise constrain him.

e. Perhaps in utopian capitalism money would permit you to obtain for your goods and your labor exactly what they would be worth to the people who would buy them. Almost any conceivable system of real capitalism, however, includes all kinds of threats and blackmail; and if you want to lie, cheat, coerce, and use other means of "persuasion," the system neatly enables you to use them almost to your heart's content. It is certainly not unique in this respect--you can

also prevaricate and steal under collectivism. But capitalism, above perhaps all other economic systems, which have widely prevailed in human history, *encourages and enables* various kinds of cheating and coercion, so that you can easily obtain for your goods and your labor more than they are worth to the people who buy them. To think that money permits no deals except those leading to mutual benefit by the unforced judgment of the traders is lunacy. Money exists in non-capitalist economies, too--including slave and collectivist economies--and in such systems it certainly permits deals, which are not mutually beneficial or made according to the unforced judgment of the traders. Even in relatively free capitalism, money merely *allows* mutual benefit by the unforced judgment of the traders; it hardly *necessitates* it.

If I gain political influence, or am a member of a socially powerful family, or acquire a monopoly on, say, the taxicab industry in a given town, I can easily force you to give me more money than you think fair for various goods and services that I offer you; and I can definitely trade with you more to my advantage than yours. Money may well *enable* traders to have unforced judgment for their mutual benefit in their deals; but the only way to *ensure* their dealing with each other in a fair and mutually beneficial manner is to grant them sainthood. This, essentially, is what Rand grants them in a book, *Capitalism, The Unknown Ideal*. In an interesting review of this book, Honor Tracy points out that in London's Hyde Park in the 1930s fanatics who denounced one thing and deified another vied with each other in fervent lunacy. Says Ms. Tracy: "A type there was

yet nuttier than the rest, namely, he who knew what was wrong with mankind and, alone of his fellows, was able to put it right.” (1966). The tone of Rand’s book, with its monomaniac vehemence, is much like that of the thinkers in Hyde Park.

Tracy goes on to say: “Where businessmen are concerned, her notions are romantic indeed. Their minds are rational, creative, inviolate (at this point, for some reason, she hauls in Galileo), they stand for freedom, civilization, progress, joy: they form the elite of a society, if not--as Valery said that Europe did--‘la partie précieuse du monde.’ It is a view that some of us would like to explore in greater depth: an appendix, telling us exactly where these paragons are to be found, would have been most acceptable.” (1966).

Money itself is a commodity whose value is constantly changed by forces beyond anyone’s control. Failed currencies and inflation/deflation are proof of this. Moreover, Rand completely overlooks the fact that money itself is a commodity and subject to the law of supply and demand for it. If you are on a gold standard, then the supply of gold is quite outside the control of the individuals producing goods and services. Yet the supply of gold drastically affects their relative wealth in terms of purchasing power. For instance, the western world’s economies were stagnant in the 1500s before the discovery of the new world’s gold. There was no gold to buy new or expanded production so there was no new or expanded production. The infusion of gold from the new world gave people money to buy more and thereby put more people to work. However, as a result of they’re being

more gold, gold went down in value, buying less goods and services than before. The same is true of paper money. If the government does not print enough money to support the purchase of new and more products, then either those new products are not produced or some other products that were are stopped from being produced. If the government prints too much money, then the money in circulation goes down in value – what we call inflation. Money is subjective, not objective; by nature since its value is determined by people's attitudes. Therefore her assertion that money is somehow an objective arbiter of anything is silly.

Moreover, individual capitalists are largely ignorant of macroeconomics and labor economics. Since, under capitalism, they direct the economy, we have the blind leading the blind, prejudiced by capitalism for short-term self-interests only. Individual businesspersons cannot control the whole economy by their individual actions and are therefore forced to use lowest common denominator to compete so their businesses survive. If one keeps some other industry's customers working, that does not mean that industry's workers will buy one's products. Like the fastest runner, they will survive if their competitors fail for any reason, not necessarily for producing an inferior product or service.

. International blockage and lag-time are facts. If the U.S. stimulates its workers with money spent buying goods from countries that don't buy our goods, this stimulation aids another country, and hurts our own. Frivolous production rather than substantial/sustainable production is an inescapable outcome of capitalism. More and more people must be employed in what is not necessary

since machines will be brought in to replace workers. Some psychological fears innately caused by capitalism. 1) You can fail at any time. 2) You and your whole family's future are always at stake. 3) Selling promotes "rating," "needing," and self-esteem--mood swings based on others perceived view of you.

Furthermore, after one's needs are met, money becomes a burden itself. If one has more money and/or goods than one can use, one must spend time worrying about, maintaining, storing, insuring the goods, etc. These are not tasks that undisturbed people enjoy. Moreover, having a great deal of money makes one a target for those that want or need it. Therefore, more and more money and goods can be contrary to survival, security, piece of mind, and true friendships. To fixate on money as the only measurement the "good" is disturbed.

As an ironic example of how capitalism almost inevitably corrupts itself, because human beings are much interested in profit than they are in productive effort, the March 1968 issue of *The Objectivist* announced that even the Nathaniel Branden Institute had compromised its principles in order to take in some extra money. After logically being a purely profit-making corporation for the first decade of its existence, and after discouraging tax-exempt donations to its cause, this objectivist Institute established a nonprofit corporation Foundation for the New Intellectual, with Nathaniel Branden and Leonard Peikoff as trustees, and had it accepted as a tax-exempt organization by the United States Internal Revenue Service, so that people could make nontaxable deductions to help carry on its work. This procedure clearly takes advantage of "welfare state" tactics, is anti-

capitalistic in any *ideal* sense, and beautifully demonstrates that the purest capitalists almost always get corrupted by the lure of easy monetary gains instead of sticking to truly productive labor. If even Branden and Rand must look to *donations* and *altruism* for support, is pure capitalism really a feasible ideal?

From the foregoing analysis, it can be seen that in numerous ways, which I have delineated--as well as in many more which would be redundant to examine--the relationship between Ayn Rand's theories of capitalism, the free market, money, and the value of labor to empirical reality is practically nil.

Rand's economic theory consists of one unverified (and often unverifiable) axiom after another, amounting to a huge tautology. It is a system of religious economics or economic religiosity. It presents some sophomoric arguments favoring capitalism; and it is of no advantage to the individual who believes, on more solid and empirical grounds, that capitalism may have distinct disadvantages, but that it nevertheless is a superior kind of economy. If anything, it should be of great solace and aid to the rabid collectivists, who may easily undermine its credos, and thereby may falsely convert some individuals to their own sometimes religious tenets: that collectivism has few failings and innumerable virtues. Essentially, Randian economics is an intellectual word game and an unexciting one at that!

Chapter 4

The Randian View of Politics

Ayn Rand's view of politics, as one would expect, dovetails closely with her view of economics. Let us briefly consider some of her main political views and show how they are empirically untenable, and how they are essentially derived from tautological, theologically oriented premises.

Unrealism and anti-empiricism. The almost complete lack of realism and empiricism in the objectivist attitude toward politics is epitomized in Ayn Rand's remark that the best political figure to emerge for fifty years is Barry Goldwater (*Look* magazine, 1964). Anyone with *that* kind of political acumen is hardly to be trusted regarding her *general* political views, wouldn't you say? However, though I can forgive Rand for this *faux pas*, let me question her political philosophies on other grounds. To wit:

1. She insists, "To deny property rights means to turn men into property owned by the state. If you claim the "right" to "redistribute" wealth produced by others you claim the "right" to treat human beings as chattel," (Rand, 1964). While it is true that some collectivist states feel that they have the "right" to treat a person as a chattel, or, at least, to subjugate some rights to those of the state, it is hardly true that *all* collectivists are in this category. The men who ran the nineteenth century communistic colonies in America were most interested in preserving the individual's rights; as were the Social

Darwinists, who at various times during the twentieth century controlled Russia, Germany, Sweden, and various other civilized countries. Many hard-shelled capitalists seem to have much less concern for preserving the individual's rights than innumerable socialists.

2. . Rand: "The right to life is the source of all rights--and the right to property is their only implementation. Without property rights, no other rights are possible," (1964). Since people sustain their lives by their own effort, anyone who has no right to the product of his effort has no means to sustain his life. People who produce while others dispose of their products are slaves. I have elsewhere in this book pointed out the extreme bigotry of this statement. Here let me just note:

a. Quite obviously, people in collectivized countries, such as the former Soviet Union, who have no real property rights, do have many political rights.

b. Even more obviously, individuals without the right to the products they produce in these countries hardly starve to death!

c. Real slavery clearly existed in the United States until the Civil War--and we were, during its existence, a distinctly capitalistic country!

3. Rand continues: People's rights can be violated only by the use of physical force. (1964). Only by means of physical force can one person deprive another of her life, or enslave her, or rob her, or prevent her from pursuing her own goals, or compel her to act against her own rational judgment. What a fantasy! Economic force is the power par-excellence for depriving another of her life (by starving her to death or encouraging her to commit suicide because of economic loss or privation), for enslaving her, robbing her, preventing her from pursuing her own goals, or compelling her to act against her own rational judgment. Physical force today, is rarely used for these purposes in countries such as our own; but economic coercion is constantly used to these ends.

4. Rand insists, "The purpose of law and of government is the protection of individual rights" (1964). It certainly is! But history shows us that war and water control were the original purposes of law and of government. Moreover, protection of individual rights is only *one* major purpose. Law and government today are constantly employed to protect group as well as individual rights; to aid the economic development of a country; to explore uncharted aspects of the universe, such as the planets in outer space, which individuals are not likely to explore with their own limited resources; to establish politico-economic treaties among different nations; and for other

purposes. Perhaps it is not too wise for governments to undertake all of these goals;; but they do. And it is foolish for Rand either to ignore this fact or to contend that it alone is the source of all the evil that is rampant in the contemporary world.

5. When people do not follow Rand's political (or economic or social) ideology, she quickly accuses them of being muddled and confused and of having no ideology at all. Thus, we read: "The disgraceful and terrifying answer is: *there is no ideological trend today*. There is no ideology." Also, there are no political principles, theories, ideals, or philosophy, no direction, no goal, no compass, no vision of the future, no intellectual element of leadership (1966). This is dramatic hogwash because:

a. According to Rand's own philosophy, people emote and act on the basis of their value systems--their underlying (though often undefined and unclear) philosophies. Rand follows up the above quotation with: "Are there any *emotional* elements dominating today's culture? Yes. One *Fear*." Unfortunately, she is right. The Republicans and the George W. Bush administration have used terrorism, war, religion, and economics to make and keep Americans, and the world fearful, while dehumanizing all that oppose them. But if people are afraid, they must have some *idea*, some *view*, which makes them afraid. So they obviously have some philosophy.

b. When people have no particular direction, goal, compass, or vision of the future, then we could well say that they have a shortsighted, hedonistic philosophy: "Live for today, for tomorrow you may die!" Or perhaps they have a line of least resistance philosophy: "It is too hard for me to think consciously and concertedly about myself and the world, or I never succeed at it, or am I able to use it very well due to forces beyond my control, so I shall take things the easy way and get through life with a minimum of conscious planning." But these, of course, are philosophies. People hold certain values, including political values. The mere fact that their political principles, theories, ideals, or philosophy are not what Rand *demand*s, hardly proves that they do not have any.

c. Rand constantly accuses non-objectivists of being unthinking, un-intellectual, or un-philosophic, because she and the objectivists then have a chance to show how supremely philosophic *they* are. They not only have an explicit and well-detailed point of view, but they would like to be known as the *only* group that has such a clear-cut creed. She forgets, of course, that there are plenty of other religions with equally well-formulated gospels. Anyway, the more "confused" and inexplicably ideological she can show that non-objectivist groups are, the safer and more superior she and her

followers feel with their own razor-sharp inanities--a sure sign of a subliminal inferiority complex.

6. Rand is so anti-empirical that generally, she has little difficulty in upholding a politico-economic doctrine even after she has herself summon definite evidence to contradict it. Thus, Nathaniel Branden states, "What Ayn Rand establishes is that the separation of State and Economics is *a defining principle of capitalism*," (1965b). This, to say the least, is an odd statement, when Rand simultaneously point out that pure capitalism and the unadulterated free market have never existed in human history precisely *because* government controls keep impinging on the free market and rendering it no longer free. The capitalism that is supposedly *defined* by the separation of State and Economics, therefore, is obviously an impossible ideal or a myth.

7. States Ayn Rand: "The only 'obligation' involved in individual rights is an obligation imposed, not by the state, but by the nature of reality (i.e., by the law of identity): *consistency*," (Rand, 1962). This means the obligation to respect the rights of others, if one wishes one's own rights to be recognized and protected. Rand sets up definitions here which are not consistent with the rules of living in the world around us--though they may be logically consistent with her own unempirically based axioms. Thus:

a. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, obligation means: (1) the contract, promise, moral responsibility, etc., binding one. (2) A duty imposed legally or socially; thing that one is bound to do as a result of a contract, promise, moral responsibility, etc.; (3) the binding power of a contract, promise, moral responsibility, etc.

Obviously, by these definitions, anyone who lives within a given state has some kind of contract between himself and the state. It, on the one hand, protects and helps him; and he, on the other hand, agrees to abide by its rules. Consequently, he *does* have an "obligation" to the state in which he voluntarily resides when it imposes certain restrictions. Remember that "rights" are merely laws or rules that the society gives its individual members. A society might be better off giving its members certain rights, but the burden of proof of an assertion falls on the asserter – and Rand has not provided such a proof.

b. The law of identity or of consistency does lead you to believe that if you wish to have your own individualism and your own rights recognized and protected, you'd better respect the rights of others; and this same law of reality leads you to believe that if you want to be protected by the state you'd better follow its rules. Once you elect to accept state benefits, you presumably also elect to sacrifice some of your individual rights to state rulings. How Rand

expects you to stick to the law of identity and *not* agree to surrender some of your individualism for state protection and help, I know not!

c. As usual, because she considers "state" a dirty word, Rand would rather see the individual as being obligated to a rather vague "nature of reality" than to a specific "state." But if you conform to the former and also choose to live in a particular state, I am afraid that, willy-nilly, you'd better conform to state rules too! One cannot have an "obligation" with the "nature of reality" at all since there is no person or thing with which to contract such an obligation. We may be harmed or not as well off if we do certain things in nature, but it is not a contract by any means.

8. Because she sees statism as being all bad, and non-statism (which apparently has never existed in modern times!) as being all good, Rand writes false assertions such as this: "Statism is a system of institutionalized violence and perpetual civil war. It leaves men to choice but to fight to seize political power--to rob or be robbed, to kill or be killed." (1966b). Why is this assertion false? Because:

a. Statism has been with us for many generations; and in some instances it has led to institutionalized violence and perpetual civil war and in other instances it has not. According to the dictionary, statism consists of "the principle or policy of concentrating extensive economic, political, and related controls in the state at the cost of

individual liberty.” If this is so, then statism has existed in ancient Greece and China, among many American Indian tribes, in modern Scandinavian countries, and in the United States and Great Britain in the twentieth century. In all these cases it has not led to institutionalized violence and perpetual civil war. In fact, some less statist countries (such as India) have had more violence and civil war than some more statist countries (such as Great Britain) have.

b. Even under statism, men do have other choices than to fight to seize political power. They can fairly easily resort to political maneuvering (as they do in so-called democratic countries); they can prove their exceptional competence and get into power that way; they can outlive their opponents; they can gain adherents by writing and speaking extensively; and they can use various other means of winning power from those who have it.

c. Although Ayn Rand goes on to say that “there can be no peace within an enslaved nation,” (1966b), this is palpably untrue. Slavery and semi-slavery have existed in the world for many centuries; and some slave states have had peace for decades and centuries at a time, while many non-slave states have been embroiled in continual internal and external wars. Statism demands wars; a free country does not, states Rand (1966b). More bombast! Many democratic countries resort to war more than do statist nations:

because they have little land and a large population; because their elected leaders would rather involve them in war than go out of power themselves; because many of their legislators are emotionally immature; and for various other reasons.

9. Rand's ignoring of historical facts is often amazing. She writes, for instance, "so long as men are subjugated by force, they will fight back and use any weapons available." (1966b). History has innumerable instances where this has not been true. The European serfs and peasants, who were for centuries subjugated by force, rarely resorted to uprisings against their oppressors. Slaves in ancient and modern times have only occasionally revolted. The Jews under Nazism, the businessmen and farmers under Soviet rule, the people under South American dictators calmly and passively, for the most part, bore their subjugation by force and did practically nothing to fight back. Maybe they should have; but they didn't.

Extremism. Objectivist political extremism is just as rampant and as bad as is economic and general extremism. Here are a few examples:

1. Ayn Rand is so violently opposed to most pacifists-- because, they *do* have ideals to which she does not subscribe, along with some she does--that she declares that these same peace movements do not oppose dictatorships; the political views of their

members range through all shades of the statist spectrum, from welfare statism, to socialism, to fascism, to communism. Think about the plunder, the destruction, the starvation, the brutality, the slave-labor camps, and the torture chambers, the wholesale slaughter perpetrated by dictatorships. "Yet *this*," Rand says, "is what today's alleged peace-lovers are willing to advocate or tolerate--in the name of love for humanity," (Rand, 1966b) Is this accurate? By no means.

Because:

a. The great majority of pacifists today do not uphold dictatorships but actively oppose them. A small group, largely consisting of pseudo-pacifists, uses anti-war slogans in order to foster Communist or other views. Rand seems deliberately to choose to identify the entire pacifist movement (which, incidentally, partly includes objectivists and, libertarians) with this small group.

b. Most people who believe in welfare statism--such as Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy--hardly believe in armed dictatorships. Rand again deliberately lumps these two groups together, so that the former may be tarred with the brush of the latter.

c. Practically all true pacifists are against the plunder, the destruction, the starvation, brutality, slave-labor camps, torture chambers, and the wholesale slaughter perpetrated by dictatorships--

and also perpetrated, in many instances, by democracies! But Ayn Rand stubbornly refuses to acknowledge this fact, in order that she and her cohorts will appear to be the noblest pacifists of them all.

2. Rand's usual uncompromising stance is carried over, as one might expect, into her political views. She says: "There can be no meeting ground, no middle, no compromise between *opposite principles*," (1966b). This means *no* "moderation" in the realm of reason and of morality. Government by consensus abrogates reason and morality.

First of all, there certainly *can* be a meeting ground and a compromise between opposite principles. The fact that you desire much freedom and also desire maximum protection from the predation of others includes fairly opposite principles: since utter freedom would mean that you must protect *yourself* and had better not seek any allies when others attack you. But you can choose to compromise these opposing principles, and try for some measure of individual freedom while at the same time endorsing a police force, an army, and other state agencies to protect you from violent others. So compromise between principles *is* possible. What Rand really seems to mean is that compromise between two opposing *absolute* principles is impossible; and she is probably right. But who needs absolute

principles? Answer: Ayn Rand and her highly emotionally insecure, disturbed objectivists.

Further, government by consensus--which seems to be something of a synonym for democracy, although you would never know it considering the pejorative manner in which Rand uses this term--hardly abrogates the concepts of reason and morality. Morality *is* always based on some kind of consensus since morality is relevant to the survival of a group of people. If there were only one person, there would be no need for morality, only what is best for that individual. We consider murder wrong not because it is absolutely, theologically, or intrinsically wrong, but because *most of us* would not want to live in a world where it was considered right. Similarly, we agree on just about all other rules of morality by consensus. Reason, moreover, goes right along with consensus: since, when you live in a social group, it is wise and reasonable to consider the views and actions of others, and to live with them, following their moral rules.

Because Rand's concepts of reason and morality are basically theological and absolutist--and hence, notably unreasonable--she cannot reconcile them with democratic votes and compromise. That is too bad; but that is *her* problem!

3. Nathaniel Branden repeats Ayn Rand's extremist political outlook in regard to freedom and physical force: "In a political-

economic context, freedom, she states, means one thing and one thing only: *freedom from physical compulsion*. There is nothing that can deprive man of his freedom except other men--and no means by which they can do it except through the use of force," (1965b). Only by the initiation of force (or fraud, which is an indirect form of force) can people's rights be violated. The ridiculous one-sidedness of this statement is shown in these critiques:

a. Physical compulsion, as I noted earlier, is not the *only* form of coercion against humans. Economic sanctions, emotional blackmail, social boycotts, and various other forms of coercion are just as effective--and with some individuals much more effective--in controlling and restraining people.

b. Physical compulsion, as I have also noted, is at least overt and visible; and it may frequently be more efficiently combated than more subtle compulsion, such as the levying of social sanctions.

c. Politico-economic freedom means the ability of people to think for themselves, without being unduly influenced by others. Such freedom is never absolute, but may well be relative. With Rand's absolutism, thinking for yourself is actually discouraged since, according to her mode of "reasoning," you must intransigently follow certain extremist "moral laws." And if you are not a thoroughgoing objectivist, you are obviously a louse. When Rand talks about politico-

economic freedom, one is reminded of Hitler talking about the good of mankind.

d. She denies anything that does not fit her philosophy into something that does, as when she calls "fraud" indirect "force". The fact is that most advertising is a form of fraud, and a definite "force" used to control people's attitudes and purchases.

4. John Galt, Rand's protagonist in *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), makes this statement about the use of force in politics: "Whoever, to what purpose or extent, initiates the use of force, is a killer acting on the premise of death in a manner wider than murder: the premise of destroying man's capacity to live." This is nicely poetic; but it is still asinine extremism. Perhaps Rand would behave in a totally paralyzed, suicidal manner if she had to live under a regime that threatened her with physical force; but there is no evidence that most people do. The human animal, perhaps unfortunately, gets used to threats of violence and death, and even survives comfortably in the face of such threats. People can actually be happy in front-line trenches, when death may strike at any moment; and can still enjoy themselves when they live under ruthless force and murdering dictatorships.

5. Regarding government functions, Rand contends that the only proper function of the government of a free country is to act as an agency that protects the individual's rights from physical violence.

She says that a proper government has the right to use physical force *only* in retaliation and *only* against those who initiate its use. Proper government functions include the police, the military forces, and the law courts, (Rand, 1966b). Objections to this view may be raised as follows:

a. It would certainly be foolish if a government, through its police force, *only* used physical force in retaliation and *only* against those who initiate its use. If a madman, for example, is screaming and yelling and gesturing wildly, and it looks like he might well harm someone, should not the police subdue him, by drugs or manacles, and take him into protective custody?

b. If a government is to protect the individual's rights it must go far beyond protecting him from physical violence alone. What about his right to live safely when high tides are threatening to inundate his home or when he takes a commercial airplane flight? Isn't it wise for government regulations and actions to protect him in *these* respects?

c. If the government really only has the right to protect the individual from physical violence, why is Rand allowing it to establish and maintain courts to protect men's property and contracts, and to settle disputes among men according to objectively defined laws? Civil

court cases rarely involve force or outright fraud, and theoretically should not be held, according to her thinking.

Contradictory views. Partly because of its extremism, objectivism tends to make statements, which are in direct contradiction to those it makes in other political regards. Here are a few of them:

1. In her book, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966b), Ayn Rand points out the horrors of statism in general and of its two main forms, socialism and fascism, in particular. Then she declares: "This anti-ideology has a new and very ugly name: it is called '*Government by Consensus.*' If some demagogue dictated that statistics should be substituted for truth, vote counting for principles, numbers for rights, and public polls for morality, he would not get very far. Yet all this is contained in the notion of '*Government by Consensus.*'"

Apparently no usual form of government satisfies Rand. Authoritarianism is a horror; and democracy is an almost equal horror. Her extremely negative-outlook allows no modification of either system; so she condemns both--and ends up with no system: anarchy.

2. In regard to justice, Rand states: "The basic principle governing justice is the principle that no people may obtain any values from others without the owners' consent. People's rights may not be left at the mercy of the unilateral decision, *the whim* of others."

(1964). The second part of this statement is a contradiction to the first.

If I can obtain *no* values from you without your consent, then it would appear that I *am* very much left at the mercy of your unilateral decision, your arbitrary choice, your irrationality, and your whim. Suppose, for example, we both live in the same community and you own all the land in that community, and I own none. I happen to have a good deal of money saved up and I wish to use part of it to purchase a moderate-sized parcel of land from you. But since I cannot do so without your consent, and there is no governmental or other agency that can force you to sell to me, I am left at the mercy of your unilateral decision, your arbitrary choice, your irrationality, and your whim. Perhaps, if you were truly wise, you would part with a piece of your land for a good chunk of my money; but you certainly wouldn't *have* to be wise; and could, in fact, be quite disturbed and irrational.

If Ayn Rand wants to show that, under capitalism, men *usually* will not act irrationally and by sheer whim in their economic dealings, because the money they can gain or lose from such dealings will *tend* to make them more rational, she can make a pretty good point. But that is not what she is saying here. She seems to be saying, instead, that capitalism and the free market *always* insure rational behavior on the part of two traders; and that *therefore* universal justice rules

under a pure capitalistic system. She forgets entirely that under *any* economic system, men can fairly easily be (and invariably are) arbitrary, irrational, and whim-driven; and even that it is quite possible that capitalism, which gives them more economic leeway than most other economic systems do, *encourages* this kind of erratic behavior. Consequently, she does not see that she contradicts herself when she contends that free trade is good and that deciding by whim is bad, and the former precludes the latter. Moreover, while capitalism demands that companies be economically rational to compete in order to stave off competitors and survive in the short run, after the monopolies which she advocates set it, there is no such need. For instance, we see privately owned media oligopolies not reporting news and turning down advertising for causes or activities of which they do not approve, perverting the 1st Amendment's freedom of speech. *Irrelevant arguments.* In her over-eagerness to "prove" that her political views are correct and those of her opponents are mistaken, Rand resorts to various kinds of irrelevant arguments. Here are a few examples:

1. Rand contends that the bloodiest conflicts of history were *civil wars*, when people could find no peaceful recourse to law, principle or justice. The history of all absolute states is punctuated by bloody uprisings--by violent eruptions of blind despair, without

ideology, program, or goals--which led to ruthless extermination of dissenters. (1966b).

This may well be true (though doubtless exaggerated). The fact remains, however, that the history of virtually all non-absolute states is *also* punctuated by bloody uprisings and civil wars, by violent eruptions of blind despair, and by ruthless extermination of one faction by another. Witness our own civil war and some of the atrocities that occurred in the course of it. Witness, also, the wars of extermination which we, democratic capitalists, waged against the American Indians. Witness, again, the physically violent wars between capitalists and workers in nineteenth and early twentieth century America, which have recently decreased considerably--as government control, statism, has been mandated to reduce the elements of pure capitalism in our country!

2. Ayn Rand again states that if people want to oppose war, they must oppose statism. The tribal notion that the individual is sacrificial fodder for the collective, and that some alleged "good" can justify it rules out peace *within* a nation and peace among nations. (1966b).

Firstly, strife within a nation has frequently existed, in the United States and elsewhere, under highly statist and relatively unstatist regimes. It flows from many causes--including capitalist economic

causes--and, if anything, seems to be reduced in statist societies. Thus, it is likely that there was as much internal warfare between various political and economic factions in Russia in the decades immediately preceding, than for those following, the statist revolution of 1917.

Secondly, peace among nations does not seem to be especially related to the degree of statism that exists in the world. Slave states, monarchies, dictatorships, and democracies all seem to have a reasonably poor record in regard to international warfare. Under certain economic circumstances--especially where there exists a large population on a relatively small and unproductive area of land--dictatorships may more frequently wage war than democracies; but the latter hardly are immune to this kind of temptation.

3. Ayn Rand states: "Let all those who are actually concerned with peace--those who do love *man* and do care about his survival--realize that if war is ever to be outlawed, it is *the use of force* that has to be outlawed," (1966b). This is contradictory--even comical, for Rand still insists on viewing force in strictly physical terms. Force includes other kinds of coercion, including economic force. And as long as *this* kind of force is not outlawed, it is unlikely that the world will have lasting peace. Stated otherwise: if the use of force is self-defeating and causes wars, it is irrelevant to note that physical force

must be outlawed since if capitalism, which is economic force, was allowed to reign unchecked. It provoked revolutions in American, France, Russia, and China. Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Fascism are capitalistic.

It is an irrelevant argument to note that physical force has to be outlawed in order to put a stop to civil and national wars. Moreover, if any capitalist or non-capitalist nation refuses to outlaw physical force, who is to stop it from starting an actual war? Even if Ayn Rand were still alive, she obviously could not stop the "outlawed" terrorists and their war on us!

Strawman arguments. In the realm of politics, the objectivists use the same kind of pseudo-arguments that they use in other areas.

Thus:

1. Ayn Rand notes: "Statism--in fact and in principle--is nothing more than gang rule. A dictatorship is a gang devoted to looting the effort of the productive citizens of its own country." (1966b). Statists attack their neighbors when they exhaust their own country's economy. They have only this means of postponing internal collapse and prolonging their rule.

The assumptions here are (a) that all statist nations are absolute dictatorships; (b) that all dictatorships consist of nasty gangs; (c) that

a statist, and not an objectivist⁷, ruling group must exhaust its own economy; and (d) that when it does it has to attack its neighbors.

Actually, many statist nations are mild dictatorships or are almost as democratically run, politically, as are supposedly non-statist nations (if one can actually find any of the latter today). Dictatorships themselves are frequently benevolent and are not run by nasty gangs in all instances. A statist-ruling group need not exhaust its own economy--especially when it exists in a land that has plenty of natural resources and relatively small population. And when statist-ruling groups do exhaust their own economies, they do not always attack their neighbors. Rand's statement about statism and gangsterism is almost entirely inaccurate!

2. "The only danger," writes Rand, "to a mixed economy, is any not-to-be-compromised value, virtue, or idea." (1966b), Any uncompromising person, group, or movement is the only threat. The only enemy is integrity. Cute! She is saying here, if you do not wholeheartedly endorse my idea of a pure economy, if you believe that we should compromise in any way and mix business and politics, therefore, you obviously have no integrity. You may hold your own position consistently, honestly, and courageously. But you still clearly

⁷ Since objectivist capitalism depends on ever increasing consumption, it seems inevitable that a capitalist economy not exhaust its own resources.

have no integrity--for your position differs from the absolutely right one: Ayn Rand's!

3. Whenever it is possible for Rand to take a term that is generally accepted by some people as representing something "bad" and link it up with another term which is not generally accepted as "bad," but which she puts in that category, she rarely misses an opportunity to do so. For example, Rand alleges, "Racism is the lowest, most crudely primitive form of collectivism," (1964). It ascribes moral, social, or political significance to people's genetic lineage--if I say that people's intellectual and character traits are produced and transmitted by their internal body chemistry, this means that people are to be judged, not by their own character and actions, but by the characters and actions of a collective of ancestors.

Rand's description of some of the aspects of racism here is fairly accurate; but on what basis does she link it with another term she despises, collectivism? Certainly, racists believe in the importance of their ancestors--but so, for that matter, do capitalists, since they are very much in favor of inheritance of property.

Many collectivists are far less racist than are most dyed-in-the-wool capitalists. There was relatively little discrimination against blacks in Soviet Russia; and there still is considerable discrimination against them in capitalist America. The collectivist groups in the

United States have generally been quite accepting of racial equality, while the conservative-capitalist groups have frequently been racist. Clearly the main connection between racism and collectivism is the one that exists in Rand's head. Because she dislikes both creeds, she arbitrarily connects them.

4. Rand takes her opponents' views to ridiculous extremes and falsely accuses them of thinking in these extreme terms. She, in this respect, declaims: "What subjectivism is in the realm of ethics, collectivism is in the realm of politics." (1964). The idea that: "Anything I do is right because *I* chose to do it," is a negation of morality; and the notion that: "Anything society does is right because society chose to do it," is not a moral principle, but a negation of moral principles that banishes morality from social issues.

Probably no collectivist or statist believes that principle: "Anything society does is right because *society* chose to do it." This is the kind of belief that Rand *would like* her opponents to have, but actually none of them do. Besides, if anyone did think that anything society does is right because it chose to do it, this would *not* be a negation of moral principles nor the banishment of morality from social issues; it would merely be an extreme point of view on morals--and no more extreme, probably, than Rand's view, which essentially seems to be that nothing society does is right because society chooses to do it!

Tautological thinking. Objectivist philosophies in regard to politics are highly tautological and definitional. For example:

1. “*There is no such thing,*” states Ayn Rand, “*as the right to enslave.* A nation *can* do it, just as a man *can* become a criminal--but neither can do it *by right.*” (1964). If this is true, and no nation has the right to enslave, then it should also be true that no nation has the right to free, to promote capitalism, or to do almost anything else.

According to the dictionary, *right* means “that which a person has a just claim to; power, privilege, etc. that belongs to a person by law, nature, or tradition: as, it was his *right* to say that we thought.” By this definition, of course, a nation has any right that belongs to it by law, nature, or tradition; and the right to enslave was an accepted one of these for many during much of history. What Ayn Rand really is getting at in this passage is that the right to be free and capitalistic is absolute (meaning, Rand-given) while the right to enslave is nonexistent (meaning, Rand-denied); and here, of course, she is completely tautological.

2. “The right to life means that a man has the right to support his life by his own work (on any economic level, as high as his ability will carry him); it does *not* mean that others must provide him with the necessities of life.” (Rand, 1964). How curious! If people do have any inalienable right to life--which, pretty clearly, they do not

have, since the universe really doesn't give a fig for them, and would just as soon see them starve as live--it would appear that they have this right *whether or not* they support their lives by their own work. If they *should* or *must* live, then other people should support them even if they don't lift a finger to support them or are too weak or old or stupid to do so.

Actually, except by arbitrary definition, people do not have any *inalienable* rights. They have rights only by *agreement* with other people; and if, under the American Constitution, they have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, this is because others who live under this Constitution *agree* that they have it. If they agreed that people's right to life means that they are not to be left to starve even if they did no work to support themselves, then that would be their legitimate right by this agreement.

3. Objectivists give whatever definitions to terms are most convenient for their own purposes. Thus, Ayn Rand states: "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." It protects individual morality in a social context, provides a 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,*" (1964).

First of all, Rand's definition of individual rights conflicts with some of her other definitions: Usually, she claims that individual rights are inalienable, and here she makes them somewhat contingent on and attached to special rights. Even so, she gives individual rights a very special and sacrosanct place and makes them a means of subordinating society to moral law. *Whose* moral law? Certainly not the moral law of those people who think that social rules come first and individual rights second! The moral law mentioned here would appear to be the law *of* individual rights; and the two are *defined* as being synonymous. Then, *because* of this definition, social rights automatically become subordinate to individual rights and to moral law. In most ethical and political discussions, the reverse is true. Society's rules and the moral law are thought of as being fairly synonymous; and individual rights are made subordinate to these two concepts. Ayn Rand's reversal of this idea is probably just as legitimate as any dogmatic upholding of it. But the real point is: *Both* extreme viewpoints are definitional. Neither individual nor social rights take priority over each other--except when we *say* that they do. All "rights" are collectivist in nature – they have to be collectively, though not agreed upon 100%, to become rights. Rand seems to think that individual rights *are* paramount in, of, by, and for themselves; and

does not seem to recognize that it is *she* and her objectivist thinking that *makes* them paramount.

4. Continuing with the idea of social and individual rights, Rand contends: "The principle of man's individual rights represented the extension of morality into the social system." (1964). It limits the power of the state, and protects us against the brute force of the collective, the *might to right*. "The United States was the first *moral* society in history." Objections to this statement are as follows.

a. "The brute force of the collective," is definitional. Individuals who *demand* that their rights be more important than those of collective rights often *define* the collective as consisting of brute force. Similarly, people who put the state first and the individual second would probably speak of the "disruptive force" of the individual!

b. Morality, in this passage, as in most of Ayn Rand's other writings, is *defined* as a limitation on the power of the state. Conversely, a limitation on the power of the individual she defines as immoral. But morality is neither individualistic nor social; it is transactional and dualistic, transcending the two. Defining it exclusively in individual or social terms is nonsense, and will ipso facto lead to one-sided, poor results. How can a society exist without taking care of its individuals and vice-versa?

c. The United States became the first moral society in history, according to Rand's view, because it follows the one essence of morality which she accepts: subordination of social to individual rights. Obviously, in many other respects the United States has been immoral from its inception; but Rand and her associates blithely ignore this, as long as *their* definition of morality is followed. In this case, acutely so, since she turns a blind eye to the slavery our founding forefathers promulgated on many races.

5. Going still a step further in her definition of man's rights, Ayn Rand states: The idea of individual rights is so new in human history that most people have not grasped it fully. (1964). In accordance with the mystical or the social theory of ethics, some people assert that rights are a gift of God or that rights are a gift of society. But, in fact, the source of rights is man's nature. "The Declaration of Independence stated that men 'are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.'" The issue of people's origin does not gainsay the fact that they are entities of a specific kind--rational beings. They cannot function successfully under coercion, and rights are a necessary condition of their particular survival. Human rights do not stem from divine law or congressional law, rather the law of identity. A is A--and Man is Man. This statement consists of tautological thinking for several reasons:

a. Rand defines a human as “a rational being.” All the empirical evidence that we have acquired throughout the ages would tend to contradict this notion--since humans are certainly far from rational in many of their political, social, and economic doings! They have some *potential* for rationality; but they also have distinct potential for making irrational, destructive choices, and the latter tend to win.

b. Because people supposedly are intrinsically rational, Rand *assumes* that they cannot function successfully under coercion. Actually, the more rational they are the *more* successfully they can function under almost any circumstances, including coercion. People may function *better* without, than with, coercion; but even this is not always true. Children often function better with some degree of forced discipline or coercion; and hordes of so-called adults do, too! Even if people do get along better without coercion, their individual right, which supposedly preclude being socially coerced are hardly a *necessary* condition for survival. We know that people often survive without such individual rights. They even frequently survive under conditions of slavery--and as Victor Frankl did, in a concentration camp. So, we can only conclude that people survive *better* or *more happily* under non-coercive conditions.

c. The source of people's individual rights is their nature, because they may *tend* to feel more comfortable with such rights than without them, and may therefore *often* do something to establish them. Clearly, they frequently surrender them for decades or centuries at a time, as they just have in the USA under Patriot Acts I and II; so we may justifiably conclude that they *also* can "comfortably" subordinate their individual to social rights. They often *tolerate* oppression quite well! Workers in a capitalist society frequently complain about their loss of rights at work in capitalist economies. They can choose a good paying job, or submit to a poor one. They have no right to stop Alan Greenspan, for example, from putting people out of work when he raises interest rates.

All people's doings are directly or indirectly rooted in their nature, but to say that the concept of individual rights is particularly rooted in that nature is to make a highly problematic statement. *Partially*, yes, for they sooner or later overthrow tyranny for freedom; But somewhat belatedly in numerous instances!

d. Assuming that the law of identity holds true, that A is A, and that humans are human, it is irrelevant to say that *therefore* the source of human rights is not divine law or congressional law but is the law of identity. If humans are human, then obviously *anything* that humans do is still an important characteristic. Consequently, if humans

decide that the source of their rights is divine law or congressional law, we could logically say the law of identity is the source of divinely and congressionally awarded rights. The law of identity, or the fact that humans are human, generally “proves” *everything* about people’s thinking and doing--therefore, it really proves *nothing*.

e. Ayn Rand signally avoids considering one of the main rights that people almost always have: the *right* or *privilege* of choosing “good” and “bad,” “right” and “wrong” behavior. Why do they have this privilege? Because although they are born and reared with distinct tendencies--such as the tendency to breathe, eat, and survive--they also have some measure of agency or free will. They therefore can *choose* to promote or to refuse to go along with these strong tendencies. Thus, they can *refuse* to breathe, eat, and survive, can kill themselves, and can perform other self-defeating acts. And they frequently do! So if Rand is accurate about humans normally seeking to be free rather than to be coerced, and even about their *naturally* choosing individualism over collectivism, she forgets that they also have the *right* or *privilege* of choosing whatever paths they do choose. As Robert Harper and I said in the first edition of *A Guide to Rational Living*, people always have the *right to be wrong*! Rand says that if people exert their right to be wrong, and pick collectivism and statism, which are in her view *very* wrong, they will be completely

self-destructive and socially destructive. As I have been showing in this book, this is a great exaggeration. Maybe, as she alleges, collectivism and statism will bring people *worse* results, but not be *always* in *all* ways fatal.

Because Rand doesn't give people much agency, choice, and free will; because she would not face the fact that they are all *fallible and imperfect*; because she insists that they *absolutely must* politically, economically, and otherwise follow the *right* (meaning, Randian) way; she abrogates their actual humanity and refuses to give people the *right to be wrong as they inevitably often will be*. Here again we see that her views are utopian and highly unrealistic. They may work for angels and fairies--in which, ironically, Rand does not believe!

From the material outlined in this chapter, it can be seen that in the realm of politics, as in that of economics and of individual worth, Rand's philosophy starts out with a resounding tautological premise, assumes that this is an indubitable fact, and goes on from there to religiously build a framework of interdependent assumptions that lead nowhere--except back to Rand's original un-provable premises. Her work does not deal with political laws and rules as preferences, nor with the usefulness of some concepts rather than others. Instead, it assumes absolute requisites for governmental regulations and non-regulations; and it chases its tail in a vicious cycle of endless

theological hypotheses. This is not heresy; it is lunacy. And I intend to make the most of it.

Chapter 5

Assorted Evils of Ayn Rand's Objectivism

From Rand's views on economics and politics stem 'assorted evils,' some of which I shall now briefly consider. These are not *all* the nasty corollaries of her basic philosophies; but they are some of the more important negative consequences of these views.

Deification of productiveness: The objectivists apotheosize and deify productiveness. They not only think that human achievement is good--which indeed it may be--but that it is practically the be-all and end-all of existence. Branden states the position in these terms: "The virtue of *productiveness* is the basic expression of rationality in man's relationship to nature--and it is obvious why a morality of survival would attach especial importance to this virtue." (1965b). He says that the characters whom Ayn Rand presents such as Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia and Dagny Taggart, a composer such as Richard Halley, and men of lesser ability and a smaller-scale ambition such as Eddie Willers--have one common attribute: a passionate love of their work, a dedication to achieving the utmost possible, a profound sense that thought and effort are not a burden or a duty. By regulating their lives through intelligent productiveness, people gain control of their

own lives that non-humans cannot achieve. Productive work is the supremely *human* act, because animals must adjust themselves to their physical background and humans adjust their physical background to themselves. Although this view includes some good points, it also includes several mistaken views:

1. Branden, closely following Rand, defines rationality in terms of productiveness, when obviously reason goes far beyond that. A person can be rational when idly contemplating the tides, planning a work of art that he will never produce, philosophizing about the order of the universe, thinking about himself and his problems, and when doing a hundred things that are essentially unproductive and that may never lead to any kind of productivity. But if people were *completely* unproductive, they would starve to death (unless living in a region where food and shelter were most easily available); and they would then be, presumably, irrational. But this hardly means that all or most of people's rationality stems from their productiveness, or that all of it be spent on productive efforts.

2. Frequently the more productive an individual is, the less rational she tends to be. For while she is busily producing, she cannot easily stop and think about *why* she is producing, or what is the best way to produce, or what is the main purpose of her life.

3. Many people produce beautifully for the wrong reasons. They may despise themselves if they don't produce, and therefore compulsively achieve. Or they may think they need the approval of others and can only gain that approval through notable production. Or they may foolishly believe that they have to produce much more than they can ever possibly consume and may engage in compulsive hoarding. This kind of behavior is not particularly useful or rational.

4. Although a morality of survival may well attach virtue to productiveness, such a survivalist mentality does not exist in large parts of the world today--such as in our own country. Consequently, we might do better to de-emphasize the virtues of productiveness and consumption, and perhaps emphasize other virtues. Indeed, to *dedicate* one's life to productivity is to ignore and neglect the other important aspects of life: It is to lead an unbalanced life.

5. For Ayn Rand's productive heroes to intrinsically enjoy their work is fine. As I emphasize in the theory of rational emotive behavior therapy (Ellis, 1962, 1999, 2001a, 2001b; Ellis & Becker, 1983; Ellis & Harper, 1968), people who acquire a vital absorbing interest in some aspect of life, and who work hard to fulfill this interest, are generally happier than those who are less absorbed.

But when John Galt, Hank Rearden, and others have "a dedication to achieving the utmost possible to them," we become

suspicious of their motives. It seems obvious they are perfectionistic, demanding of themselves that they achieve the utmost possible and, if they don't, they are no good and do not deserve to live this supposedly happy life of working arduously all the time. This (as I pointed out in Chapter 2) is an enormous danger of Randism--it promotes the view that people's personal value *depends* on their achieving in an outstanding manner. Emotional disturbance lies in that direction!

6. It is difficult to see how productive work is the supremely *human* act. In fact, it seems that productive work is not necessarily highly intelligent. Animals, such as beavers, seem to work very hard at what they do; and innumerable animals, such as birds, bees, and ants, seem to work ceaselessly at the process of feeding and protecting themselves and their progeny. Remarkable human acts, which these animals never seem to perform, lie much more in the realm of high-level thinking, of imagining, of devising works of art, and of enjoying esthetic pursuits (such as writing, acting, and opera singing). While these kinds of supremely human activities involve some amount of work and productivity, they also may be contemplative, imaginative, and playful.

Non-acceptance of biological limitations. Because Rand squarely places virtually all-human evils at the door of restricted capitalism and

statism, she fails to see that humans have distinct biological limitations--and that these very limitations on their rationality frequently *cause* some of the non-ideal conditions, which she so hysterically deplures. Here are a few indications of her failure to think in biological and sociological terms:

1. Branden following Rand, excoriates Erich Fromm for his views on human alienation, which Fromm traces to some biological limitations that people are forced to confront, and to some contradictions inherent in life itself. Branden admits that there are a good many men who are alienated from themselves, from their fellow men, and from nature (1965c), as Fromm holds (1963); but he goes on to state: Large numbers of people suffer a chronic preoccupation with death; bitterly resent the fact that they cannot simultaneously be a concert pianist, a business tycoon, a railroad engineer, a baseball player and a deep-sea diver. They therefore find their existence an unendurable burden. Many people may be found in the offices of psychotherapists; they are called neurotics. "But why does Fromm choose tramps, morons, and neurotics as his symbols of humanity, as his image of man? Why does he claim that *theirs* is the state all men and out of which they must struggle for?

The answer to Branden's question is: Because Fromm is much more realistic than Branden and Rand. He sees that what we

frequently call “neurosis” is partly or largely the human condition; and that it inevitably accompanies, to some degree, our biological makeup as well as the fact that we live in social groups. Actually, as I have shown in the final chapter of *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* (Ellis, 1962), there are many important ways in which people are restricted by their biological tendencies and are strongly biased toward behaving neurotically. This does not mean they *cannot improve remarkably*. They can teach and train themselves to overcome many of their innate limitations and to behave more rationally. But this does not gainsay the fact that in many ways it is *easier* for them to be irrational than sane, (Ellis, 1976, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2005).

Rather than admit this, objectivists speak pejoratively of most humans as “tramps, morons, and neurotics,” dehumanizing them, and assume that just as soon as they see Rand’s light they will become hardworking, noble citizens. But, if they do not see the light, they deserve to perish. This anti-biological bias leads them into all kinds of other anti-empirical conclusions, some of which we have already seen and many of which will be examined in the chapter on objectivism and religion.

2. Rand also does not face the fact that adolescents have an innate tendency to think crookedly and to be highly suggestible and overemotional. She writes, *People*, by the time they reach

adolescence, have sufficient knowledge to deal with fundamentals of life, (1964). But this is the period when they become aware of the need to become conscious beings and formulate principles, ideals, and values and, for self-assertion. But because nothing is done, in our anti-rational culture, to young people in this crucial transition, the result is a frantic, hysterical irrationality of most adolescents. Minds go through a process of atrophy at the time set by nature for their growth.

Note, here, the strong implication that adolescents are innately uncrippled, non-frantic, and non-hysterical, and that it is only the non-Randian philosophy with which they are instilled in this society that makes them unthinking and disturbed. Not that our anti-rational culture does not *help* adolescents to become *more* upsettable, anxious, and hostile than they otherwise might be. It does! But adolescents *easily* acquire and make use of silly ideas: Their general tendencies are merely aggravated, and by no means caused, by the nonsense of our culture (Cloninger, 1999; Ellis, 1966c, 1976, 2001b, 2002).

3. Rand's anti-biological notions are carried over into her views of people and their economic behavior. She paints this idealistic and unrealistic picture of a trader: "a man who earns what he gets and does not give or take the undeserved." (1964). He supposedly treats people as independent equals. He deals with them by means of a free,

voluntary, unforced, un-coerced exchange. "A trader does not expect to be paid for his defaults, only for his achievements." He does not blame others for his failures, and does not mortgage his life into bondage to the failures of others.

It could be argued, the reverse of this picture is true. All over the world in various kinds of economies, a trader generally is mainly interested in taking what he does not (according to Ms. Rand's standards) deserve. One siren call of capitalists is "caveat emptor" or "let the buyer beware." As stated above, Socrates lamented that the only law of a trader was "to buy low and sell high." A trader does not treat people as independent equals, but usually tries to fool them, even enslave them to his wishes. He prefers to deal with them by means of trickery or forced and coercive exchange--without competition--trying to get them to do his bidding, whether they like it or not. He does expect to be paid for his defaults as well as his achievements. And, in most cases, he tries to blame others for his failures--not to mention to rationalize, when he does fail, and pretend that he has not. Rand's picture of the capitalist producer and trader is ideal; and it is an ideal that is so far removed from social and biological reality that it probably never will be realized. Worse, she deludes herself that her ideal *is* reality, that people are the way she

pictures them. No wonder she is so horribly disillusioned with people's actual behavior!

Inconsistency and illogicality. Probably all people and all philosophies are somewhat inconsistent. That is hardly surprising, because human animals are not always logical in their thinking. Rand, however, pretends to be exceptionally logical and rational; and keeps emphasizing the Aristotelian law of identity--that A cannot, at the same time, be both A and not A; that a person is a person; that reality is. Consequently, we might expect her to be reasonably consistent in her beliefs.

Unfortunately, her main consistency springs from her premises rather than her rationality. She constantly sets up un-provable axioms--as I have been showing throughout this book--and then, for the most part, she proceeds logically. However, what she deduces from these rather meaningless, and sometimes downright irrational, propositions is therefore just as meaningless and irrational. Like most religions, therefore, objectivism is fairly consistent. However, Rand's statements are internally inconsistent in several important respects, including the following:

1. While touting the New York skyline as "a monument of a splendor that no pyramids or palaces will ever equal or approach," Rand insists that the skyscrapers of Moscow and the great Soviet

dams were not fine achievements because "it is impossible to compute the human suffering, degradation, deprivation, and horror that went to pay for a single, much-touted skyscraper of Moscow." (1964). But it is also impossible to compute the human suffering, degradation, deprivation, and horror that went to pay for a single, much-touted skyscrapers of New York. Who can say how many Americans, in the course of building such skyscrapers, went bankrupt, ruined their lives with business worries, killed themselves with heart attacks, deprived themselves of good times, and otherwise suffered?

Rand contention that the Russian skyscrapers were erected more inefficiently than were their American counterparts may be true. But for her to deny Russian achievements--especially considering how far behind Americans the Russians were at the beginning of their revolution in 1917--is for her to use quite a different yardstick in measuring the two sets of accomplishments.

Dualistically, the dark side of these "accomplishments" is that many died, many were maimed, and many more were injured in, or deprived by, the building of these largely unnecessary, monumental tombstones.

2. "It is not," states Rand, "a man's ancestors or relatives or genes or body chemistry that count in a free market, but only one human attribute: productive ability." (1964). It is by people's

individual ability and ambition that capitalism judges them and rewards them accordingly. But what, if not people's ancestors, relatives, genes, and body chemistry, *creates* this productive ability? If they were basically born with this ability, their genes and body chemistry obviously were involved; and if they were raised rather than born with it, then obviously their ancestors and relatives were involved. Unless, of course, Rand believes in magic.

3. In Rand's book, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, Nathaniel Branden says: "Pleasure, for man, is not a luxury, but a profound psychological need." Pleasure accompanies life, the reward of successful action. Pain accompanies failure, destruction, and death. On the very next page, Branden states, "it is his values that determine what a man seeks for pleasure." (1964b.)

Now, which *is* it? If pleasure is actually a need--meaning a necessity --of humans, and if it automatically flows from their successful actions, how can it also depend on values or philosophies? Suppose a man believes--as I, for one, do--that he does *not* need pleasure, but merely desires it strongly. Is it *then* one of his necessities? Or suppose he believes--as I, even more strongly, do--that he can enjoy himself even when his actions fail and when he is not achieving anything notable in life. Can he then experience enjoyment in spite of his non-achievement?

Pleasure, actually, stems from (a) physical enjoyment or release from pain and/or (b) psychological enjoyment, which stems from *evaluating* something as 'good' (whether or not others similarly evaluate it). Rand, who ostensibly has a value-system concept of pleasure, is so overly-eager to deify successful action that she becomes inconsistent in her concepts of pleasure, and wrongly connects it with successful action instead of with the human's *view* of his or her successful action. She declares that every person is an end in themselves, not a means to the ends of others. *She is not a sacrificial animal.* As a living being, she must exist for her own sake, neither sacrificing herself to others nor sacrificing others.

The achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose, Rand claims. Ironically, if man *is* to achieve his own happiness he'd better (at times, at least) make moderate sacrifices for others; otherwise, they will probably not sacrifice time and energy for him when he needs their help. *Complete* selfishness is a serious contradiction: As long as man lives in a social group, and as long as he wants to be happy while so living, complete selfishness will alienate him, help make him miserable, and perhaps destroy him.

5. In *For the New Intellectual*, Ayn Rand flip-flops: "The New Intellectual will be the man who lives up to the exact meaning of his title: a man who is guided by his *intellect*--*not* a zombie guided by

feelings, instincts, urges, wishes, whims, or revelations.” (1961b).

Later, in the same paragraph, she says that people will know that they need philosophy for the purpose of *living on earth*. Then, she asks: “Who--in this damned universe--who can tell me why I should live for anything but for that which I want?”

Here again we have the basic contradiction between Rand and Branden’s divergent views on thought and emotion. On the one hand, they admit that emotion springs from human thinking and imply that you can virtually always be happy, if you think straight, no matter what are the circumstances of your life. But when you do this, you’d better acknowledge the fact that many people seem to be quite happy when they think thoughts that are clearly anti-Randian—if, for example, they are orthodox followers of conventional religious sects, or if they believe in collectivism rather than in capitalism.

Consequently, Rand and Branden demand that the happy and un-neurotic individual think the *right* thoughts, and not be guided by the *wrong* thoughts—that which lead to feelings, instincts, urges, wishes, whims, or revelations which the objectivists cannot go along with. They state that “a rational, self-confident man is motivated by a love of values and by a desire to achieve them,” (Branden, 1964b); but they really mean that he is motivated by a love of objectivist-approved values. Nothing else will do!

Again, objectivism states that “emotions and desires are not causeless, irreducible primaries: they are the product of the premises one has accepted,” (Branden, 1964c). But then Rand insists that “desires (or feelings or emotions or wishes or whims) are not tools of cognition; they are not a valid standard of value,” (1964). The problem here, as I pointed out in the first chapter of this book, is that Rand first claims that *all* emotions *only* spring from human values; then contends that *some* emotions--particularly desires and whims--have an independent existence. If she recognized that emotions *also* spring from physical, biologically based urges as well as from values, she would not be so inconsistent. But her need to have people possess only proper, objectivist-inspired values leads her astray.

6. Rand claims to be ultra-rational and utterly logical--but continually uses *shoulds*, *oughts*, and *musts* to describe the proper behavior of men. She talks incessantly about the necessity of accepting reality (which itself is a contradiction, since it's *highly desirable*, but certainly not *necessary* that we accept the world around us)--but she abjures probability and demands absolute certainty, which does not appear to exist in this universe. She says she is not religious--but she deifies much of human behavior (e.g., pure capitalism and unadulterated selfishness) and vilifies other behavior

(e.g., collectivism and adulterated selfishness). Conventional religionists similarly deify what they like and vilify what they dislike.

"I win by means of nothing but logic and I surrender to nothing but logic," John Galt proclaims. "When I disagree with a rational man, I let reality be our final arbiter." Yet, in the same paragraph, he insists: "I deal with men as my nature and theirs demands: by means of reason." (Rand, 1957.) *Demands?* Reality does not demand; it merely *is*. It is unrealistic humans--and especially Randian humans--who demand--and who whine, and cry, and rant, and hate, when reality does not give them exactly what they demand.

7. Rand inveighs against the Judeo-Christian-Islam concept of sin. Says John Galt : "Damnation is the start of your morality, destruction is its purpose, means and end. Your code begins by damning man as evil, and then demands that he practice a good, which it defines as impossible for him to practice.... The name of this monstrous absurdity is Original Sin." (1957). Good comment! But Rand and objectivism start their morality by damnation--by damning all non-capitalistic, un-achieving, imperfectly thinking individuals. They demand that people practice a good, which is probably impossible for them to practice--pure capitalism, pure selfishness, and pure reason. It consequently begins--and ends--with Original Sin: human fallibility and anti-objectivism!

8. One Randian absolute often tends to contradict another. Thus, in *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt thunders: "This greatest of countries was built on *my* morality--on the inviolate supremacy of man's right to exist." Then, he uses absolutes again: "*Rights* are conditions of existence required by man's nature for his proper survival." If people are to live on earth, it is *right* for them to use their mind, it is *right* to act on their own free judgment, it is *right* to work for their values and to keep the product of their work. If life on earth is their purpose, they have a *right* to live as rational humans. Nature forbids them the irrational.

What Rand seems to be saying here is that (a) you have an inviolate right to exist, provided that (b) you do as I say you should do and use your mind, act on your free judgment, work for your values, and keep the product of your work according to orthodox objectivist principles. Otherwise! --You presumably have no right to exist.

9. Nathaniel Branden tells us that in *Atlas Shrugged* "Ayn Rand brings an inexhaustible richness and originality or perception and analysis," (1965b). She treats all issues in a fresh and startlingly illuminating way. Her slogan in *Atlas Shrugged* is "Check your premises." She demands of her readers: to check, to re-examine, and to rethink the most fundamental premises at the root of their convictions and of their culture. Fine! But unfortunately Rand and her

associates spent virtually no time checking her premises. If they would do so, the rational ones among them would see that these premises are almost entirely definitional and tautological. They exist because they exist--because Ayn Rand has proposed them. Any empirical evidence does not back them; and they frequently lead to pernicious results for the people who hold them. It is ironic that the originator of the sensible "Check your premises" slogan so rarely follows her own advice.

Objectivist ethics. A special system of ethical postulates underlies the entire Randian position. We have been examining some of these postulates under other headings in this book; now is the time to look at them more systematically. Here are some of the major errors in Rand's ethical theories.

1. Ayn Rand begins her discussion of ethics with this statement: "Is the concept of *value*, of 'good or evil' an arbitrary human invention, unrelated to, underived from, and unsupported by any facts of reality?" (1964). Or, she continues, is the concept based on a *metaphysical* fact, on an unchangeable condition of people's existence? Does arbitrary human convention, a mere custom, decree that people must guide their actions by a set of principles? Or does reality demand it? Is ethics the province of *whims*: of personal emotions, social edicts and mystical revelations? Or is it the province

of *reason*? Is it a subjective luxury--or is it an *objective* necessity?

Among the several mistakes Rand makes in this declaration are these:

a. Although value and ethics may be based on reality, how can they be based on "an *unalterable* condition of man's existence"? How does Ms. Rand know whether man's existence is unalterable or what is unchangeable about it? All of human history tends to show the opposite: that the condition of human existence is highly alterable; and modern sociological thinking tends to heavily espouse the view that utopia will probably never exist because it implies a perfect, changeless society, while all human societies *do* change.

b. The facts of reality do not *demand* anything--including the point "that man must guide his actions by a set of principles." (1964). If man wants to survive and *if* he wants to live in a reasonably stable and happy manner, then *it seems much wiser* that he have a set of ethical principles than to live without such principles. But people do not *have* to survive, they *need* not be happy, and even reality *must* not exist. Consequently, ethics is neither a subjective luxury nor an objective *necessity*. It is a set of rules that people *had better* establish and guide themselves by (and keep *revising!*) if they want to attain reasonable security and order.

2. Rand continues: It is only the concept of "Life" that makes the concept of "value" possible. It is only to a living person that things can be good or evil. This statement is true--but tautological. A human evaluates because he is alive; and value, or good and evil, is meaningful only to a living being. For a human to live *means* for him to perceive, think, evaluate, and act.

3. "Let me stress the fact that living entities exist and function necessitates the existence of values and of an ultimate value which for any given living entity is its own life." (Rand, 1964.) Thus we achieve the validation of value judgments by referring to the facts of reality. The fact that a living entity *is*, determines what it *ought* to do. What "is" is the same as what "ought" to be.

Whoa, there! First of all, human functioning hardly *necessitates* the existence of values and of an ultimate value that for any given living entity is its own life. There is no reason why a living entity has to *keep* existing and much proof that it cannot live forever. There are many different kinds of values by which living humans can, if they wish to do so, continue to exist; and it is probably impossible to say what an *ultimate* value for life's continued existence actually is. The only ultimate value that I can think of is the value that life itself feels good a majority of the time, and that therefore the organism *should*

continue to exist. But even this value, as noted in (a) in this paragraph, is not a *necessary* derivative of one's existence.

For life to continue, the only "ultimate" values that are needed are the purely biological ones involved with breathing, eating, drinking, defecating, etc. Here is a true identity, an "a" is "a" that she refuses to see: To exist, a human does not *have* to be intelligent, happy, artistic, or highly reasoning. He or she just *has* to be alive.

Secondly, I know not where Rand magically dug out of the ether her view, "Thus the validation of value judgments is to be achieved by reference to the facts of reality." It is true that the individual's existence itself is a fact of reality. Therefore, *any* values she holds are *part* of reality. But what are *valid* value judgments and how do *they* relate to reality? According to the dictionary, *valid* means "1. Sound; well grounded on principles or evidence; able to withstand criticism or objection, as an argument; 2. Effective, effectual, cogent, etc." Now, how is *reality* to judge whether the individual's values are sound, effective, or cogent? According to the dictionary, again, *value* is "that quality of a thing according to which it is thought of as being more or less desirable, useful, estimable, important, etc." Well, is *reality* to judge whether anything is desirable, useful, estimable, or important? Or is it not the human person, the evaluator, who judges the value of something? It seems to me it is the latter.

Does evaluating have *anything* to do with reality? Probably. For example, if you value your life highly, and value milk highly because it presumably will prolong your life; and if you happen to be seriously allergic to milk, ignore your allergy, and it kills you when you drink it, your evaluation of it has been wrong--dead wrong! So if you do value, you inevitably have to evaluate some aspects of reality, and you may easily be fooled to do so to your own detriment. But--note well--even so, it is *you* who have evaluated wrongly (in relation to reality); and it is hardly the facts of reality that have *made* you wrong. Actually, it is your poor *judgment* (your false evaluation) of these facts that is the issue. You *refer* (as Rand says, but in a rather obscure way) your valuing (that life is good and drinking milk prolongs life) to the facts of reality (that you are allergic to milk); and part of your valuing (that drinking milk will prolong your life) turns out to be invalid, in the light of these facts.

Your checking these evaluations with the facts of reality, therefore, may partly validate your evaluation of yourself and of the world's influences on you. But not completely! For the most important part of your evaluating is your value judgment that your life is good, and that it is better that you continue. Thus, reality around you could be replete with cold, famine, solitude, and other unfortunate circumstances--and you, because of your religious beliefs, could still

evaluate your own living as "good" and choose to continue it. Or the facts of reality could be that you are intelligent, talented, handsome, rich, and physically healthy--and yet because of your social philosophy you could decide that life wasn't worth living, and kill yourself. Both attitudes are irrational but have occurred throughout history.

Ayn Rand's implication, therefore, that the validation of *all* your value judgments is to be achieved by reference to the facts of reality does not seem to be correct. Probably all these judgments are in part significantly *influenced* by reality; but in the final analysis, *you* decide⁸ whether to live or to die; and very often, as well, whether to be happy or unhappy, whether to focus on one thing or another, whether to think or not to think. The objectivist theory of volition and emotion points this out; but its theory of ethics seems to forget this very important fact.

Third, Rand's statement that "the fact that a living entity *is*, determines what it *ought* to do," is even more farfetched than her previous statements. Indeed, it seems to be almost a complete non-sequitur. It is the living thing itself, and not the fact of its existence that determines what it ought, or would like, to do. The fact that I exist by no means determines that I *should* live, or that I *should* love you, or that I *should* accept objectivism, or that I *should* do anything

⁸ Determinists believe that since all chemical reactions are predictable and that your brain is just a complicated chemical reaction, that all decisions are predetermined by the interaction of stimuli and your brain's chemistry like a complex spreadsheet or equation.

else. Naturally, all these *oughts* are contingent on my remaining alive: since, dead, I would have no choices. But as long as I am alive, I have many choices as to what I should or ought to do. These may be limited; but they still exist. "To a living consciousness, every 'is' implies an 'ought'," writes Rand. People are free to choose not to be conscious, but not free to escape the penalty of unconsciousness: destruction.

What she seems to mean here, is that *if* you choose to live and be happy, you had better choose to be conscious: to use your reason to focus intently on solving life's problems. She forgets, however, that you do not *have* to choose to live, certainly not to the absurd maximum she demands; and that if you do choose to live, you still have a wide choice of different *oughts*. The fact that I *am* gives me a *choice* of what I *ought* to do; my mere existence does not *make* me take certain paths, except possibly a few paths regulated by my automatic nervous system. That is, it makes me breathe, have a beating heart, and undergo certain other involuntary bodily functions. But it does not *make* me select one set of values or another, even though it probably *biases* me in favor of life and against death.

4. Ayn Rand continues: The standard of value of the objectivist ethics is the standard by which you judge what is good or evil--is *your life*: that which is required for your survival is the

standard. Since reason is your basic means of survival, that which sustains the life of a rational person is the good. That which negates life is evil. (1964). We can easily find flaws in this statement:

a. Rand may *take* human life as the standard by which one judges good or evil; but no one else has to accept this standard if he does not wish to do so. To repeat: Man has to live in order to value; but he doesn't have to live. And many men in the course of human events have decided, volitionally, to die instead of to live. Some of them, at least, would seem to have been eminently sane: since they chose to die because they were in physical pain, because life was too arduous for them, or because they had little possibility of gaining notable satisfactions if they continued to live. Ethics, therefore, need not be based on your life but on the *satisfactions, the pleasures*, you think you are likely to gain while living. That, it seems to me, would be a more sensible standard than the standard of life itself. But you can, of course, base your wish to continue living on various other standards: such as on saintliness, on productivity, or creativity.

b. Even if human survival is taken as the basic good, it is pointless to say that, since reason is man's main means of survival that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good. For several things besides reason are man's basic means of survival: for example, perceiving, emoting, and doing. Can we therefore conclude,

that which is proper to the life of a perceiving person is good? What about corpses, for example? A perceiving person at some time during his life perceives a corpse or two. Is, consequently, a corpse good?

And what about emoting? An emoting being tends to become anxious, hysterical, guilty, and hostile. Are anxiety, hysteria, guilt, and hostility necessarily good?

The main point is that all kinds of human attributes and reactions seem to be natural to humans and to be part of their "basic" means of survival. According to Rand, all these attributes and reactions should therefore be seen as "good." The fact that some of these human traits, such as reasoning, may lead to greater human *happiness* than do other traits, such as hysteria, is held by Rand as her criterion of good behavior; and her system of ethics therefore tends to become meaningless.

Rand writes that since people have to discover everything by their own mind and effort, "The two essentials of the method of survival proper to the rational being are: thinking and productive work." Ah, now the cat is out of the bag!

Rand pretty clearly started with the (unverifiable) assumption that productive work is the best possible thing for humans; then she asked herself how this assumption could be sustained; then she figured out that thinking or reasoning individuals will produce more

work than will non-rational people; then she glorified rationality in her ethical system. Her ethics start with the double-headed premise and unjustified conclusion: "*Because* living is indubitably good, and *because* productive work by living beings is essential...." it is therefore morally necessary to maximize at all times one's personal productivity to be good, to be happy. And her system proceeds from these premises to establish on "rational" grounds its derivative postulates. Her two main premises and primary conclusion are, however, quite arguable.

By Rand's "logic," incidentally, one could just as well claim: "Since everything people need for survival has to be strongly evaluated and felt emotionally, their survival depends on their intense emotions." Rationality, by this kind of definition, would be synonymous with intense emotion--and where would objectivist ethics be *then*?

Another caution: Even if people *should* survive, and even if reason *is* their basic means of survival, it is still dangerous to say that what is good for the life of a rational being is good and that what negates, opposes or destroys it is evil. For the implication here is that the good is the good, and the evil is the evil, *at all times and places*. But this is false. The conditions for people's survival (and happiness!) continually change. It is possible that under certain conditions they

might survive better if they were irrational than if he were rational. If all the nations of the world, for example, adopted Nazism, only stupid and irrational people might ultimately survive. Under those conditions, is that which is proper to the life of a rational person really *good*?

Rand is so palpably determined to prove that an immutable system of ethics exists, that it relates to human survival, and that reason is such an intrinsically "good" force that it will always lead to human survival and hence to the "good," that she ignores facts and sticks almost exclusively with her own definitions of what the "real" world is.

Rand is also stuck in survival mode. Just as the communists defeat themselves with their survival motto, "From each according to their ability; to each according to their need," Rand is stuck in hers, "From each according to their ability, to each as much as the market will bear." Both attempt to maximize production. Once we have enough to survive, certainly when we have luxuries, both of these extremes become pretty silly. For who is going to do work they do not like so others can have luxuries, or for luxuries for themselves that they cannot use? Only neurotic, disturbed people--extreme capitalists and collectivists.

5. John Galt, the hero of Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* says: "If I were to speak your kind of language, I would say that man's only

moral commandment is: Thou shall think." (1957.) But no, moral commandments are chosen, are not forced; understood, nor obeyed. It almost looks like Rand is accepting the point that morals *are* invariably chosen--and can always be *re*-chosen. What she really seems to mean, however, is that once we "understand" the "true" nature of reality, of life, and of reason, we shall feel intellectually compelled to pick her objectivist, or absolutist view of ethics.

As ever, she is devoutly definitional and religious in her imposing "truth" on not only her followers but, really, on *all* the rest of us. This is akin to the pope and his cardinals saying that *everyone*, including non-Catholics, has to be baptized and regularly go to confession if they are to survive and be "saved!"

6. The most pernicious aspect, perhaps, of Rand's ethics is shown in her attitude toward "personal immorality:" (Learn to distinguish the difference between your errors of knowledge and breaches of morality. If you are willing to correct it, your error of knowledge is not a moral flaw. If you judge humans by the standard of an impossible, automatic omniscience, you are a mystic. When you don't know something that is not immorality. "But if you refuse to know, it is an account of infamy growing in your soul. Allow yourself errors of knowledge; but do not forgive or accept any breach of morality. Give the benefit of the doubt to those who try to know; but

treat as potential killers those specimens of insolent depravity who demand that you do things without reason.” Such people proclaim a license that they ‘just feel’ you should take. Beware of people who reject an irrefutable argument by saying: “It’s only logic.” They mean: “It’s only reality.” “The only realm opposed to reality is the realm and premise of death.” (1960).

Here are several objections to Rand’s ethical, or unethical viewpoint:

a. To say that a breach of morality is the conscious choice of an action you know to be evil seems sensible enough. But to include also as an immorality a willful evasion of knowledge, a suspension of sight and of thought, runs into territory that is not easily demarcated, and that is quite dangerous. Suppose, for example, that you are ashamed of your feelings of hostility to, say, your mother. You therefore, consciously or unconsciously, avoid thinking about her, and perhaps avoid the topic of mothers in general. Are you immoral because of your conscious evasion or unconscious repression? If so, which of us is not frequently immoral?

b. Assuming that you refuse to face certain facts or to investigate some aspects of knowledge because of your shame or anxiety, are you really an infamous person? Should you be eternally damned for this behavioral error?

c. If you discover that you or one of your associates is immoral in the sense that you or she refuses to know something, should you be unforgiving forever? Granted that an ethical error may exist (at least, by Rand's standards), should the mistaken individual be condemned as a person for all time just because she has chosen to be wrong? If so, this is truly a cruel "ethical" doctrine! And it seems to forget that the purpose of morality, presumably, is to *help* human beings, rather than to consign them to some kind of eternal hell.

d. If you volitionally do a wrong act or refuse to face knowledge, you would be pretty crazy if you did not have some kind of *reason* for making this error. Thus, if you deliberately and needlessly harm another human being, you probably will be thinking, as you do so, that she *deserves* this harm, or that you are so angry that you *can't help* harming her, or that, even though you are wrong about harming her, for you to act otherwise would be still more wrong. And if you choose to avoid knowing something, you probably will do so because you think it would be worse to face it than to avoid it. These choices may be erroneous; but since you made them for misguided *reasons* (as humans frequently will do), should you be looked upon forever as a horribly immoral person who is deserving of severe punishment?

7. Morality is normally based on the philosophy of enlightened self-interest. Since *you* do not wish to be needlessly harmed by others and since *you* would like to be aided by others when you are in unfortunate circumstances, *you* agree that it would be better if you didn't harm others and that you would come to their aid in their hour of need, (Ellis, 1965b, 2001b, 2003).

Objectivism, however, is so one-sidedly obsessed with the virtue of pure selfishness (whatever *that* really is!) that it can in no way see a morality that is partly based on helping others when they are troubled and needy. Writes Rand in this connection: a morality that holds *need* as a claim, holds emptiness--and non-existence--as its standard of value. "It rewards an *absence*, a defect: weakness, inability, incompetence, suffering, disease, disaster, the lack, the fault, the flaw--the zero," (1957).

What Rand will not face here—and she is, by her own standards, presumably *immoral* for not facing--is the fact that virtually all humans, on many occasions during their life, are weak, unable, incompetent, suffering, diseased, disaster-ridden, lacking, faulted, and flawed. It is too bad that they often are that way; but they are hardly, therefore, totally *worthless*. Rand's morality, clearly, is designed only to help the competent, able, and strong--the *heroes* of the world, and let the rest of us suffer and die!

This does not mean that every single one of us, to be moral, *must* spend his life giving to the poor, helping the suffering, and uplifting the weak. If we want to define morality as (a) first, taking care of ourselves and (b) second, avoiding needless harm to others, and (c) never damning them totally (giving them, in REBT terms, unconditional other acceptance [UOA]), that seems fine.

At least we will meet minimal moral requirements for individual and social living. But if we want to go beyond this to add (d) helping those who are less fortunate than we are, (while not foolishly sacrificing ourselves,) this too would seem to be a rational moral code, especially when we teach and help them to become more independent. But Rand insists that *any* amount of sacrifice for others is irrational and immoral--and she thereby constructs an unrealistic and impractical ethical system. Only in heaven--in which Rand obviously does not believe--might such a system work!

8. The inherent perfectionism of the objectivist code of ethics is nicely stated by Ayn Rand's favorite hero, John Galt: "Man has a single basic choice: to think or not, and *that* is the gauge of his virtue." (1957). He and Rand hold that moral perfection is an *unbreached rationality*--not the degree of your intelligence, but the full and relentless use of your mind; not the extent of your knowledge, but the acceptance of reason as an absolute. Well, that certainly wraps it

up! If you are in the least irrational or if you do not absolutely accept reason as the determiner of all that is good in the world, you are clearly immoral. Shall we get the hell fires ready for you now?

9. Further, contrary to the principals laid down by Skinner and the behaviorists, Rand seems to believe that pure punishment without clear explanation and a scientific schedule of application will change people -- or that they deserve to suffer and die if they do not change under such a system. Skinner, etc. al., showed that people will not learn from such a method of punishment. From reading Rand one gets the sense that she does not believe her system will change anyone either -- that she is really advocating economic social Darwinism with her "reality" as the executioner. The huge problem with this is that almost everyone will be executed with the remainder mired in a producers' hell without rest or customers, since everyone is producing all the time.

Sexual Puritanism. Along with her unrealistic theories of economics, politics, and human worth, Rand has some views of human sexuality that are divorced from facts, and that have overtones of a puritanical nature. For example:

1. Branden declares, "A man falls in love with and sexually desires the person who reflects his own deepest values," (1964b). Since when? Innumerable men fall in love with women who reflect

their shallowest, let alone their deepest, values. They fall in love with women who disagree with them violently in politico-economic areas, who have radically different philosophies of life, and who represent almost everything they do *not* like.

As for sexual attraction, the relationship between it and one's deepest values is practically nil. Any male whose hormones are working properly tends to sexually desire innumerable women who do not in the least reflect his own values--except in so far as he values large breasts, well-shaped behinds, sensuous lips, long legs, or certain other attributes. There is often almost as little correlation between a man's sex desires and his deepest values, as there are between his tastes in food and those same values.

2. To a man of self-esteem, Branden continues, "sex is an act of celebration, it's meaning is a tribute to himself, and to the woman he has chosen. It is the ultimate form of experiencing concretely and in his person the value and joy of being alive," (1964b). But the fact remains that to a man of self-esteem sex is very often one hell of a good time and little more. Only occasionally is it a special act of celebration with a rare woman he has chosen. He can have sex simply because he enjoys it--and not to celebrate the fact that he is alive or to prove anything at all.

3. “Man’s sexual choice is the result and sum of his fundamental convictions. Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life.” Rand continues, if you show me the woman a man sleeps with, I will tell you how he values himself. Sex, when cut off from your code of values, is a fool’s self-fraud. Only the man who extols the purity of a love without desire is depraved by his desire devoid of love. (Rand, 1957).

What frightful puritanical rot! As noted above, there exists considerable observational, autobiographical, historical, and clinical evidence that whom a man finds sexually attractive may have practically nothing to do with his basic philosophy of life and his valuation of himself. In fact, the more he unqualifiedly values himself, the more he is usually able to sleep with *all* kinds of women, and to refrain from thinking himself a worm when his bedmates are not from the “right” social class. It is men of objectivist and similar persuasion, who cannot stand that they sleep with the “wrong” women, and who therefore have serious problems of low self-acceptance. And, of course, their status-seeking philosophy in part *causes* them to have such problems.

As for sexual desire devoid of love being depravity--shades of nineteenth-century Puritanism! To virtually any self-accepting contemporary individual, sex is good in, of, by, and for itself. It may

often be *better*, or more enjoyable, when it is experienced in the context of a loving human relationship. But loveless sex is not in the least depraved--except by arbitrary, puritanical definitions (Ellis, 1958, 2002b, 2003b; Ellis & Blau, 1998). Just as the insistence that sex be embedded in a love relationship is typical of modern religious groups which once used to condemn it under all circumstances, so Rand's Puritanism goes with the religiosity inherent in objectivism.

The objectivist attitudes about sex epitomize the basic tenets of objectivism, which take it out of the realm of science and reason and place it squarely in the field of religious devoutness. In swearing allegiance to the dogmas of Ayn Rand and her associates, people gain the salvation of their soul by (a) having profound faith in unverifiable, ultra-idealistic assumptions; (b) continually working in a highly productive manner; (c) achieving pride in their own superiority over others; and (d) rigorously abstaining from any purely sensual or sexual enjoyments.

It is revealing that most orthodox religions, particularly those steeped in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, emphasize these puritanical sex views, and that Rand--whether or not she is fully conscious of the fact--does precisely the same thing.

Chapter 6

Why Objectivism is a Fanatical Religion

A main theme of this book is that objectivism, while purporting to be an atheistic philosophy, and while frequently attacking the usual kinds of religion, is itself one of the leading orthodox religions. To prove this point, let us first agree on what the term "religious" means.

According to Webster's New World Dictionary, there are two main definitions of religion: 1. belief in a divine or superhuman power or powers to be obeyed and worshiped as the creator(s) and ruler(s) of the universe; and expression of this belief in conduct and ritual; 2. (a) any specific system of belief, worship, conduct, etc., often involving a code of ethics and a philosophy: as the Judeo-Christian-Islam *religion* (they only differ in minor details and can be considered one), the Hindu *religion*, the Buddhist *religion*; (b) loosely, any system of beliefs, practices, ethical values, etc., resembling, suggestive of, or likened to such a system; as, humanism is his *religion*.

As I point out in "The Case Against Religiosity: A Psychotherapist's View" (Ellis, 1983), and in my other writings on religion and REBT (Ellis, 2000; Nielsen, Johnson & Ellis, 2000), I do not consider the second of these dictionary definitions a very good one, because religion, to me, includes some concept of a supernatural deity and some dependence on this deity. When the term is used merely to denote a system of beliefs, practices, or ethical values that are not connected with any assumed higher power, then I believe it is

used loosely: since such a non-supernatural system of beliefs can more accurately be described as a philosophy of life or a code of ethics, and it is misleading to confuse a believer in this general kind of philosophy or ethical code with a true religionist.

Every atheist, in other words, has *some* kind of philosophy and *some* code of ethics; and many atheists, in fact, have much more rigorous life philosophies and ethical systems than most deists. It therefore seems misleading to say that someone is religious because she happens to be philosophical or ethical, and unless we use the term religion to mean some kind of *faith unfounded in fact*, or dependency on some assumed superhuman entities, we broaden the definition of the word so greatly as to make it practically meaningless.

In contending, then, that objectivism is a religion, I do not merely claim that it is a specific system of beliefs, practices, and ethical values but that it is a clear-cut *religious* system, in the classical use of this term, involving the kind of beliefs, practices, and ethical values that at least imply (even if they overtly deny) a divine or superhuman power in the universe and that particularly comprise a faith unfounded on fact. I contend that any dogmatic, fanatical, absolutist, anti-empirical, people-condemning creed is religious because there *is* no factual evidence on which it is based, and its adherents, in zealously sticking to it, strongly state or imply that some

higher power or order of the universe *demand*s that their views are right--and all serious dissenters to their views are for all time wrong.

Take, for example, devout nationalism. Fanatic nationalists believe that their country *is* right, whatever the facts are about any controversy in which it is involved; that other nations *are* inferior to theirs, no matter what the evidence shows; that their country does *not* merely consist of its land and its people, and their known and measurable characteristics, but of some ineffable, mystical, indefinable essence over and above these characteristics; that merely because they are citizens of their nation there *must be* something super special, heroic, and practically godlike about them; that the piece of fabric with insignia on it that represents the flag of their country *is* sacred and that any insult to it must be expunged with the insulter's blood.

Now fanatic nationalists may believe that they believe in no God whatever; they may even be militant atheists. But the fact remains that their nationalistic beliefs imply that their country is not merely good--it is great and glorious (which really means, it is close to being omnipotent). They imply that their nation and its citizens are heroic (which really means Godly). They imply that their land (and they as citizens of it) have an un-provable and yet indubitably special essence (which means they believe in mystical transcendence). And they imply

that the symbols of their nation are sacred, meaning regarded with the same respect and reverence accorded holy--i.e. coming from God.

Fanatic nationalists, then, to use Eric Hoffer's valuable term, are true believers. And so is virtually any other fanatical devotees of almost any *ism* you can think of. They may not believe in the conventional Gods, with a capital G; but they believe in higher powers, in inexorable orders of the universe, in absolutes, certainties, and inevitabilities for which there is no observable evidence, but the existence and truth of which they are utterly sure. They profoundly *feel* that these powers, orders, and absolutes exist. Just about nothing can shake their conviction that their feelings *prove* their existence. For that is the essence of their fanatic religiosity: deep abiding faith unfounded on fact--and often rigidly held in spite of the knowledge of contradictory facts. Most capitalists are also included here as religious in nature in that they are true believers in the "invisible hand" of the market, a clearly supernatural concept, to solve all the worlds' problems if the world will just set all markets free!

To be as clear as possible about the definition of religion that I am using in this assessment of the religiosity of the objectivists, let me try to define this concept in operational terms, and make clear what I think religious people, like the true believer, usually do to make and

keep themselves sacred believers. Here are what appear to be their main behaviors:

1. *Extremism and dogmatism.* Fanatically religious individuals think in extremist, all-or-nothing ways. They do not merely *think* their views are correct; they fanatically, overzealously *are sure* they are. They not only give significance to certain things; like practically all-bigoted persons, they exaggerate their dogmas' significance. When they believe in something, they tend to be highly dogmatic, rigid, close-minded, bigoted, and orthodox. They hold onto their views for dear life--as if they would fall apart at the seams if they held them more loosely, or let them go..

2. *Absolutism and need for certainty.* Fanatical religionists believe in absolutes: in unqualified and unconditional creeds. They have a desperate need for certainty, and essentially strive to be perfect and infallible. They are anxious about doing the wrong thing or appearing in a bad light to others; so they insist on an inexorable order in the universe that make them feel safe and secure. As part of their absolutism, they frequently believe in some superhuman, or infallible God, who will completely be on their side and who will help them to be angelic. But instead of such a personified God, they can easily dream up other absolute entities or ideas with which they feel safe.

3. *Tautological and definitional thinking.* Because fanatic religionists demand certainty, and because they live in a world of probability and chance where no absolutes and nothing perfect exists, they tend to create artificial certainty by thinking tautologically and definitionally. They invent some logical or mathematical system, in which everything comes out exactly because they start with certain axioms or definitions that *insure* perfect answers. Then they foist this system upon the world of diverse reality and delude themselves that it *is* reality. As another aspect of their need to be certain, once they determine that something is true, is a strong tendency to keep “proving” that it is true with specious logic and all kinds of non-sequitur “proof.”

4. *Intolerance of opposition.* True believers cannot tolerate the fact that others have opposing views. They tend to be hostile to other points of view; to diabolize their opponents; to use all kinds of illegitimate, and frequently ad-hominem, arguments against them; to set up easy-to-knock-down ideas their opponents supposedly believe and then over-enthusiastically mow down these strawmen; to try to prevent their dissenters from having a fair hearing; and otherwise to become incensed and persecutory toward those who do not agree. Here again their own underlying weakness is apparent--along with a pitiful attempt to cover it up with false strength and bellicosity.

5. *Deification and hero worship.* Fanatic religionists usually deify and hero-worship. They are not content with admiring the traits of worldly achievers; they find it necessary to apotheosize *them*, their *personages*. They frequently invent omnipotent Gods to worship; but, if they are a little too sophisticated for this kind of idolatry, they take earthly creatures and award them extreme reverence and devotion such as the objectivist shrines to Rand and Alan Greenspan, near Wall Street in New York. At bottom, they usually have grandiose aspirations and sometimes (as when they have paranoid schizophrenia, for example,) they make themselves into some kind of God. When they do not go to this extreme, they still tend to imagine some great and glorious deity or hero, to identify closely with this paragon, and to feel semi-omnipotent, holier-than-thou, and one-up-on-the-world by showing how this deity or hero accepts them and how, therefore, they are really better than other common people.

6. *Unrealism and anti-empiricism.* Fanatic religionists believe strongly in some kind of faith unfounded on fact, and frequently believe in spite of observable facts that contradict their belief system. They tend to be highly unscientific, unrealistic, anti-empirical, romantic, and utopian. They frequently make up or believe in myths and fairy tales; and stubbornly refuse to accept certain aspects of reality that oppose their religion.

7. *Condemning and punitive attitudes.* Many true believers are condemning and punitive toward other people who display “erroneous” or “wrong” behavior. They not only have powerful, dogmatic moral codes of behavior; but they moralistically believe that everyone *should* follow these codes and that they should be condemned, and perhaps roasted everlastingly in some kind of hell, if they do not. Not only do they deplore many human acts or performances, but also they theologically condemn the whole individual, as a person, for engaging in these “wrong” acts. Frequently fanatical religious individuals are scrupulous about their own morals, perfectionistically demanding that they act angelically, and excoriating and flagellating themselves and others mightily if they do not live up to this noble standard.

8. *Obsessiveness and compulsivity.* Fanatical religionists are often obsessed with their dogmatically held views and feel compelled to follow them to the letter. They do not merely want things; they *demand the world be the way they want*. They are driven people and frequently sacrifice their own happiness, and even their lives, because of their obsessive-compulsive behaviors. They are rarely relaxed or easygoing, but are over-intensely involved with their devout religious goals.

9. *Mysticism.* Religious-minded individuals often believe that it is possible to achieve communion with some deity through contemplation and love without the medium of human reason. Or they think that they can attain knowledge of spiritual truths through special intuition or through some form of meditation rather than by scientific understanding. They overly rely on intuition; they engage in vague or obscure thinking; they believe in some essence of life, some thing-in-itself, which can never be known or is knowable only to the “specially initiated.”

10. *Ritualism.* Many, perhaps most, religious persons tend to believe in and to follow arbitrary rites and rituals, which they consider necessary for good living. They believe that either they will be punished if they do not follow these rituals or that they will lead infinitely better lives if they do. They usually feel that some higher order of the universe, or God, demands that they practice specific rites, and they feel guilty if they do not live up to its or His demands. They believe that certain objects and symbols are holy or sacrosanct; and they frequently have various scriptures considered to be especially holy, and whose regulations must be rigidly followed.

It should be noted that all people who are religious do not necessarily subscribe to the foregoing characteristics of the fanatically religiously minded person, though many individuals do have all these

tendencies. Moreover, several of them overlap; so it is hard to determine, exactly, where one ends and the other begins. Religious people also may omit certain traits--such as sectarianism, cult-like, hallucination, and outright psychosis--that true believers frequently possess, but that may also be characteristic of the non-religious, and therefore shouldn't be included in our model of fanatical religiosity.

In any event, I believe that devout religiosity--in a fairly specific sense of this term--is realistically defined in terms of the foregoing behaviors and can be disturbed and neurotic, if not psychotic. I shall now attempt to show how Ayn Rand and her devotees hold important elements of practically all these extreme religious attitudes and acts. In so doing, I expect to make a solid case that objectivism is a religion. A good deal of the materials that have been presented in this book indicate the fanatically religious orientation of Randian philosophy. The next eight chapters contain more evidence.

Fanatical religionists see life and human values in all-or-nothing terms. They admit to practically no grays, middle ground, or compromise. They *have* to be certain of their views, because otherwise they feel terribly uncomfortable. We could almost say that incessant thinking itself is painful to them because it involves continual choices and decisions. They therefore, once and for all, pick a dogmatic creed that "answers" all questions. Thus, they can stop

thinking and merely rationalize so that the “right” answer to each question is immediately apparent. They religiously distort the pluralistic, wide-ranging facts of reality, rigidly holding to all-or-nothing rules.

Ayn Rand and her devout objectivist followers, more perhaps than any other modern philosophic group, are true all-or-nothingists. Extremism, as they often proudly admit, is their middle name.

Witness these statements:

1. Neither life nor happiness can be achieved by the pursuit of irrational whims. “Happiness is possible only to a rational man, the man who desires nothing but rational goals, seeks nothing but rational values and finds his joy in nothing but rational actions,” (Rand, 1961a).

Nothing but rational goals, values, and actions? Can *anyone* manage to be happy when held to *this* extreme standard?

Judged by Rand’s ideal of human happiness, virtually none of the great artists was happy: Mozart, Beethoven, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Dickens, Shakespeare, Goethe, and many other geniuses pursued irrational whims much of the time and only sometimes desired and sought rational goals and values. Moreover, many individuals--such as Tchaikovsky and Nietzsche--who largely pursued irrational whims, *did* manage to survive to a reasonably old age.

If Rand wants to hold that the pursuit of rational goals, values, and actions will *probably* enable *most* individuals to live longer and more happily than will their pursuit of irrational whims, they can make a reasonably good case for this hypothesis. But for their fanatically religious view--hell, no!

2. Said Ayn Rand: "If you achieve that which is the good by a rational standard of value, it will necessarily make you happy," (1961a).

Necessarily? Achieving money, productivity, and fine character traits is often good by a rational standard of value. But people who achieve these things can be miserable while those who are much more indolent and unproductive are--like it or not!--are frequently happier.

3. "Only a rationally selfish man, a man of *self-esteem*, is capable of love--because he is the only man capable of holding firm, consistent, uncompromising, unbetrayered values. People who do not value themselves cannot value anything or anyone," (Rand, 1961a). *Only the rationally selfish?* Since when? I would say that literally millions of men--and women--who had little self-esteem and who continually held infirm, inconsistent, compromising values were at times able to love dearly. Let me remind the religious objectivists that some of the greatest lovers of history--including Heloise and Abelard and the Portuguese nun, Marianna Alcoforado--were hardly

consistently rational! It is easy to contend, of course, that people who do not fully and sanely accept themselves do not *really* love others, no matter how much they think they do. But to do so is merely to *define* “real” love as an aspect of self-acceptance; and, although this kind of definitional truth discovering is a favorite trick of Rand and her objectivism, its “truth” is fanatically religious, not factual.

4. Ayn Rand: “What kind of men can be of value to one another and in what kind of society?” Answer: Only rational, productive, independent men in a rational, productive, free society, (1961a).

Her unrealistic extremism reveals itself since it follows that since (by Rand’s objectivist standard) no rational, productive, free society has ever existed, no person in all of human history has been of value to another! It might even follow that no one in the future will be of value to another, since a purely free, capitalistic, “rational” fanatical religious-objectivist society may *never* exist.

Ayn Rand: “Reason is the only means of communication among men,” (Rand, 1966a).

Do not people who are madly in love with or terribly angry with each other communicate *anything*? And do not highly unreasonable men at least communicate that they *are* unreasonable? What about the objectivists themselves, who to my (and many other people’s) way of

thinking are hardly supremely rational? Do they, at their worst, not communicate their less than rational fanatically religious views? I certainly think they do!

6. Said Nathaniel Branden: "Man must choose his values and actions exclusively by reason," (1965b). Does this mean that a man cannot legitimately choose a girlfriend because he happens, by whim, to like the color of her eyes, the way she smells, the feel of her thighs, or even the unreasonable way in which she delights in his smacking her on the behind? Does it mean that he can only legitimately enjoy a hamburger or a beer because his reason tells him that it is healthful to partake of such foods? We all know better!

Notice the extreme imperative and fanatical religiosity in this objectivist declaration. Branden does not say "It is *usually desirable* for a man to choose his values and actions *largely* by reason." He insists that people *must* choose, and presumably must *always* choose, their values and actions *exclusively* by reason. How much more one-sided and demanding can one get than to insist on such universality and exclusivity? Where hundreds of thinkers have shown how reason is, almost by definition, non-dogmatic and not religious, Branden *makes* it exclusive, dogmatic, and devoutly religious.

7. "There are two sides to every issue: one side is right and the other is wrong, but the middle is always evil," (Rand, 1957).

According to this inexorable dictum, every major compromise that was ever made in the course of human history was wrong and evil. Here is pure, unadulterated all-or-nothingism and deep religiosity. Take it or leave it. But if you decide to compromise, and to believe something along the line of, "Maybe Rand is partly right; maybe it is generally better to pick one side or another of every issue; but occasionally it is better to take the middle ground rather than stick rigidly to either extreme," you are then (obviously!) making an evil compromise and selling your soul to the devil. Moreover, she absurdly asserts that there are only two side's when in reality there are always many sides and variations in each side, to every issue.

8. "The only good thing which men can do to one another and the only statement of their proper relationship is--Hands *off!*" (Rand, 1943). If this were true, why would a wise person ever try to help a foolish one? Why would objectivists try to contradict and change the presumably foolish thinking and actions of Marxists, Freudians, Rooseveltians, and Ellisonians? If benighted or downtrodden individuals want you to keep your hands off, in spite of their plight, by all means oblige them. Even if they calmly insist on committing suicide, perhaps you'd better let them rather than try to dissuade them. But why should you not try to *persuade* others to accept help from you at times? Why should you not *offer* some aid (but not to the

point so self-destruction, pain, or significant loss to yourself), in the hope that they might accept it and then they and the whole world, of which you are a part, would improve? Would *that* be too great an imposition on them? Is any cost however small too much?

9. "There may be 'gray' men, but there can be no 'gray' moral principles. Morality is a code of black and white" (Rand, 1964). Rigid *objectivist* morality is a code of black and white; but reasonable moralities appear to have many in-between codes of gray. First of all, it is inconceivable that there would be a sane code of morality, which did not include many borderline cases due to the infinite nature of the universe, and myriads of possible behaviors. Secondly, the principles of morality themselves normally have to be formulated, when they are sensible, in terms of "usually" rather than "always," and for "most" rather than for "all" people.

This is probably particularly true if people are to base their morality on pure self-interest, as the objectivists demand that they do. For if all people are at least *somewhat* different from others, how could their self-interests always be identical? If a man is highly promiscuous sexually and meets a woman who he knows is also promiscuous, he will hardly be unethical if he quickly tries to go to bed with her. If the same man meets a woman who is interested only in having sex relations with a man who is monogamously devoted to her, then he

will be unethical unless he makes clear to her what his intentions are and how promiscuous he is. His "moral" behavior with the first woman may be quite "immoral" if acted out with the second woman. What is "white" in the first case may be "black" in the second instance. Men easily and naturally get themselves into trouble because of their tendency to over-generalize, (Ellis, 1962, 2001a, 2001b; Korzybski, 1933, 1951). If they carry this tendency over into morality, things become indeed grim!

10. "Only individual men have the right to decide when or whether they wish to help others; society--as an organized political system--has no rights in the matter at all" (Rand, 1964). Does this mean that no government or legislature has the right to appropriate funds to help the disaster-stricken people of its own jurisdiction or the suffering individuals in other communities? Does it mean that local, state, and federal governments have no right to beautify parks for the benefit of their citizens? If society, as an organized political system, has no rights to help others, why should such an organized political system exist? It is probably wise, as the Constitution of the United States tends to do, to *restrict* the rights of governmental agencies in many respects and to ensure that they do not impinge *too much* on the rights of citizens. But to restrict governmental rights completely means to decide, in effect, that there shall be little or no government.

That, essentially, is what fanatical religious objectivists seem to want. Like Lenin, they want the state to wither away; and they seem to be just as impractical about this goal as he was. More so, since he expected that the state would *eventually* wither away, while they seem to have some notion that it can do so in the near future, he was more reasonable than they. The fact is that when lives in a society one has chosen to give that society the right to impose things. Anyway, the idea that society has *no* right to decide when or whether it should help its individual members is a typical fanatical declaration of Ayn Rand and her objectivism.

11. "The right to life is the source of all rights--and the right to property is their only implementation. Without property rights, no other rights are possible," (Rand, 1964).

We would have to assume, from this commandment that in a collectivist or even a semi-collectivist society (such as now exists in the United States), no one has the right to love, to get an education, to play the piano, or to defecate.

As noted previously in this book, even the right to life is hardly inalienable. I have the right to live because (a) I think I do and (b) other members of my society allow me to live. If most of the members of my social group do not agree with me that I have the right to live, there is a good chance that they will let me die, or even

kill me; and my "right" to exist then becomes meaningless. Once my social group grants me the right to live, they can implement this right in various ways--of which granting me the right to hold property is hardly the *only* one.

In fact, the right to hold property often subverts my right to live. For if I reside in a community where no one can own property, my fellow residents will probably grant me the right to remain alive. But if I live in a community where private property is the rule, then some of my fellow citizens may easily take it into their heads to murder me for my property. It may be that if I am able to own my own land, I will tend to work harder for a living and therefore survive *better* than I might otherwise. The core purpose of the objectivist philosophy is to maximize production through incentive. But one can have incentives without ownership as almost all successful companies provide for their employees. It is incentive connected to performance, not ownership that is the prime mover. It is silly to believe that *only* because I have property rights will I manage to survive.

12. "Men of self-esteem, uncorrupted by the altruist morality, are the only men who can and do value human life," (Branden, 1962).

Who, first of all, *is* uncorrupted by the altruist morality? According to the objectivists, practically no one. Does no one, then, value human life?

Take, secondly, individuals, such as Francis of Assisi, Thomas à Kempis, and Florence Nightingale--who clearly were "corrupted" by the altruist morality. Did *all* these individuals hate other humans and see no value in human life?

Take, thirdly, people (such as, presumably, the fanatically religious objectivists) who are *totally* uncorrupted by the altruist morality. Are *they* likely to value any human life other than their *own*? Theoretically, they will probably value others because they are human, and if they value themselves, they will tend to accept others as worthy, too. But, in actual practice, are they likely to do very much to help others in times of disaster, when they are acting incompetently or weakly, or at other times of crisis in their lives? I wonder.

13. "A rational man does not hold or pursue any desire out of context. And he does not judge what is or is not in his interest out of context, on the range of any given moment," (Rand, 1964).

Rational men, then, obviously *never* rationalize, *never* have irrational desires or whims. No short-range hedonists, they--ever!

14. Said Branden: "Suppose...a happily married man, deeply in love with his wife, meets another woman for whom he experiences a sexual desire; he is tempted, for the space of a few moments, by the thought of an affair with her; then, the full context of his life comes back to him and he loses his desire; the abstract sexual appreciation

remains, but that is all; there is no more temptation to take action," (1966a).

If objectivists really think that a man loses his sexual desire for another woman when he is happily married, remembers the full context of his married life, and that he thereafter has *no* more temptation to jump into bed with this other woman, they are not considering practically all the red-blooded males whom I know! In fact, they are not even considering some red-blooded male dyed-in-the-wool objectivists with whom I am personally acquainted. The objectivist fanatically religious concept of male sexuality and its being restrained by the full context of the individual's life is literally and figuratively not for this world.

A man or woman may certainly *resist* temptation to have adulterous sex experiences when he or she considers the full context of life. But the notion that a sexually normal person will lose *desire* and have no more *temptation* for another person when he remembers his mate and their marital relationship is strangely akin to the Old Testament commandment: "Thou shall not *covet* thy neighbor's wife," and to the New Testament philosophy: "If thine *eye* offend thee, pluck it out." Super-idealistically and fanatically, to say the least, objectivists expect fallible human beings, in pursuit of their important values, not merely to forego actions but also to surrender their lusts.

The orthodox Muslims, Christians, and Jews had better move over-- they have a young rival group, which is equally ascetic in its religious demands!

15. "Mental health is unobstructed cognitive efficacy" (Branden, 1967a). When *any* individual with truly unobstructed cognitive efficacy is born and reared, I shall be delighted to meet him or her; but I am not holding my breath till this encounter occurs. In fact, just as Harry Houdini once offered a reward of ten thousand dollars to any alleged medium whose psychic tricks he could not unmask, I am thinking of awarding an equal sum to any person whose alleged unobstructed cognitive efficacy I cannot unmask. I don't expect to pay it!

If mental health is really unobstructed cognitive efficacy, and if the objectivists are, as the ample evidence presented throughout this book surely tends to show, pretty consistently illogical, fanatically religious, perfectionist, contradictory, unrealistic, and super-demanding, by their own standards they must have some significant degree of mental illness?

16. Collins points out that Ayn Rand keeps making many flat, extremist statements, some of which are apparently made for shock value, even though they have little empirical content. Thus, she states

that "America is culturally bankrupt" and "America's intellectual leadership has collapsed." (1961).

"These maxims," Collins notes, "are good enough for the sawdust trail, but do not bring us very far in a philosophy of culture."

It might also be pointed out that this kind of speaking and writing is intellectually dishonest. It is bad enough when Ayn Rand and her objectivist fellow travelers actually *believe* many of the extreme, all-or-nothing fanatically religious statements that they make. But when they make them largely for shock value, without any real belief in them that is perhaps even worse. The first form of behavior is merely stupid; the second hypocritical and manipulating. This in the face of the fact that the objectivists, in particular of all groups, ostentatiously take pride in their supposed intellectual honesty!

17. There can be no compromise between freedom and government controls. "If you accept 'just a few controls,' you surrender the principle of inalienable individual rights and substitute for it the principle of the government's unlimited, arbitrary power. You thus deliver yourself to gradual enslavement." You cannot compromise at all on basic principles or on fundamental issues. What would you make a 'compromise' between life and death? Or between

truth and falsehood? Or between reason and irrationality? (Rand, 1962).

a. "If there can be no compromise between freedom and government controls, it would appear that absolute anarchy is the only possible way for people to live and be free" (Rand, 1962). Obviously, however, while we in America do compromise between freedom and government controls, we hardly live in absolute anarchy!

Randians solidly support "voluntary controls"--such as people voluntarily paying income taxes or paying the courts when they want their contracts adjudicated. But a "voluntary" acceptance of controls is a compromise--since one could just as voluntarily decide *not* to accept them, but to live without taxes, without courts, without any government whatever. Compromise, for the most part, *is* voluntarily made; and voluntary compromise is probably the central core of democracy. Without making innumerable compromises people could hardly live in any social groups.

b. One basic principle and fundamental issue of human life *is* the principle of one person or group of people compromising with another person or group in order to live peacefully together. This principle is just as important, and perhaps much more so, than the abstract and semi-theological principle of "inalienable individual rights." If I have any "inalienable human rights," I certainly have the

right either to make compromises or not to make them; and I would be a slave to cowardice if I failed to exercise my freedom of choice in this connection because I was intimidated by the rigorous, impractical, no-compromise philosophy of the objectivists.

c. It is silly and mentally unhealthy to compare a compromise on a fundamental issue to a compromise between life and death. Almost everyone would pick life over death because almost everyone's experience is that it is much more enjoyable to be alive than dead--whether they are right or wrong. But if we take a fundamental issue--such as the issue of whether to compromise by marrying a partner who has many virtues and a few significant defects, or to uncompromisingly wait until one finds (if ever!) a partner with many virtues and no significant defects--almost everyone, in these circumstances, chooses to compromise though many do not. The liberty of those who would choose to compromise is what the religious objectivists want to take away from them.

d. Although the objectivists might not believe it, it is often wise to compromise between truth and falsehood and between reason and irrationality. For there are no absolute standards of truth and reason--at least, none that has yet been established to the satisfaction of all philosophers and scientists. Moreover, frequently it is better in human affairs for us to tell a white lie (e.g., to not let an exceptionally

anxious person know that he is dying of cancer) than to tell a black truth (to insist that he must know this fact when one knows that he will almost certainly use to destroy himself).

e. As usual, the objectivist definition of compromise does not seem to agree with anyone else's definition. Thus, Ayn Rand says:

"A 'compromise' does not consist of doing something one dislikes, but of doing something one knows to be evil." If you accompany your husband or wife to a concert, when you do not care for music that is *not* a 'compromise,' but surrendering to his or her irrational demands for social conformity, for pretended religious observance or for generosity toward boorish in-laws, *is*. (1962).

This is a meaningless distinction because:

(i) One cannot very well *know* anything to be absolutely evil, since one would then have to be God.

(ii) Almost *anything* is declared "evil" by someone who doesn't want to do it--including accompanying one's husband or wife to a concert when one does not care for music.

(iii) The mere fact that one's spouse has *irrational* demands for social conformity, religious observance, or anything else does not mean it is wrong or evil for one *rationaly* to accede to these demands. If your wife hypocritically wants you to attend religious services with

her because, although a nonbeliever herself, she is afraid to have others know that she is, and if she has many virtues and only a few failings (such as this irrationality), you may be quite wise and rational to go along with her--especially if she would raise a terrible rumpus and perhaps even get a divorce if you did not.

(iv) The "basic principles" that the objectivists stoutly oppose our compromising almost invariably seem to be principles dear to their own hearts rather than principles which may have real importance in our own lives.

f. Ayn Rand notes that "Compromise...*dissatisfies* everyone; it does not lead to general fulfillment, but to general frustration; those who try to be all things to all men, end up by not being anything to anyone," (1967b). This sentence contains several allegations which are almost certainly false but which are used as indubitable "proof" of the Randian views on compromise:

(i) Compromise, to my knowledge, has very few advocates who *fanatically* believe in it. On the contrary, it is the objectivist advocates of no compromise under *any* circumstances that are the religious fanatics.

(ii) Compromise hardly dissatisfies *everyone*. Some compromisers are very happy, once a middle-of-the-road agreement has been made with others with whom they at first almost completely

disagreed. And many compromisers who are *at first* dissatisfied with the concessions they have made later are quite pleased that they have made them.

(iii) Compromise may not lead to general fulfillment, but it also rarely leads to general frustration. Objectivists, I feel sure, become terribly frustrated when they have to compromise--because they have demonized it, the mere thought of having to do so riles them. But non-objectivists frequently are *reasonably* fulfilled rather than generally frustrated by compromising, especially those who are mostly rational and practice REBT.

(iv) Those who try to be all things to all men may end up by not being anything to anyone--but not because they are rational compromisers. They are usually not compromising but total give-in ass-lickers who do not go for what they really want at all, whose actual goal is unachievable, to please others all the time. Consequently, they frequently end up losing the respect of others and not being anything to anyone.

g. States Rand: "When a man has ascertained that one alternative is good and the other is evil, he has no justification for choosing a mixture. There can be no justification for choosing any part of that which one knows to be evil." (1967b). This assumes, again, that pure "good" and "evil" exist. It assumes, second, that one

can invariably pick a "good" choice after one has seen that it is "good" and that one *never has* to mix it in with "evil". And it assumes, third, that *no* "good" can come from anything that is the least bit "evil".

Actually, of course, even the blackest sin may lead to good since people who commit it may *learn* from their mistakes, may do good thereafter partly *because* they acknowledge their previous evil, and may have the incentive to make a major change in their lives largely because they discover the harm of their evil acts.

h. "If a man holds contradictory values," Branden states, "these necessarily do violence to his sense of personal identity. They result in a splintered sense of self, a self broken into un-integratable fragments." (1965c). Necessarily? Yes--if this man believes, as does Branden, that he *must* not hold contradictory values and is a wretch for holding them. Then he really berates himself--and does violence, thereby, to his sense of personal identity. But if, like many non-objectivists, he doesn't feel wormy for holding contradictory views, acknowledges that there are disadvantages to his being contradictory but that he can live with those disadvantages, his sense of identity or personal worth may be excellent.

i. Rand: "The Law of Identity (A is A) is a rational man's paramount consideration in the process of determining his interests. He knows that the contradictory is the impossible, that a contradiction

cannot be achieved in reality and that the attempt to achieve it can lead only to disaster and destruction.” (1965c). Therefore, she states, he forbids himself to hold contradictory values, to follow contradictory goals, or even to imagine that his pursuit of a contradiction can ever be to his interest. There are several major flaws in this kind of thinking:

(i) The Law of Identity is a limited law that only holds for a given time and place. A is A and cannot be not A, *at one and the same time or from one and the same point of view*. But A can easily be not A, at a subsequent time or from a different point of view. Thus, A is good and usable one day for one purpose and person and useless another day for another purpose or person. For instance, A is a good lover to B, who enjoys a man who maintains his erection for thirty minutes during intercourse, and a poor lover to C, who cannot stand intercourse that lasts more than ten minutes.

(ii) Because A *can* be not A, under certain conditions, and different times--the contradictory *is* possible, and *can* be achieved in reality. You can be a traitor to your country today and nobly die for it tomorrow. A father can love his child intensely on Monday and wish she were dead on Wednesday, and love her intensely again on Thursday.

(iii) Your attempt to live contradictions obviously need not lead to your disaster and destruction. If you try to be devoted to your wife and at the same time have adulterous affairs with other women, you will probably get into some kind of difficulties, but there is little reason to believe that you will necessarily destroy your marriage, your self-acceptance, or your life. In fact, if you can effectively compartmentalize your feelings, and convince yourself that you *do* completely love your wife while you somewhat neglect her for outside affairs, you may tend to create some disadvantages for yourself (such as underlying guilt and anxiety); but you may do yourself and your wife more good than harm this way, (by deciding to stay with your wife rather than leave her to less desirable circumstances for your new, temporary lover), and may actually get away with your contradictory and even hypocritical values.

(iv) It is notable that where Ayn Rand and the objectivists are constantly quoting Aristotle's Law of Identity in an effort to prove that anyone who in any way lives with compromises and contradictions in his value system is horribly immoral and deserves to be damned, Aristotle himself, the first recorded enunciator of it, did not use the Law in this manner. On the contrary, in regard to human affairs, he constantly espoused what has come to be known as the Aristotelian mean--that is, conduct that is moderate and avoids extremes or

excesses. Aristotle was a pretty good Aristotelian--and certainly no objectivist!

(v) The Law of Identity was devised by Aristotle as a logical measure, to demonstrate that two propositions may be contradictory. It does not necessarily imply, however, that it is *wrong* or *terrible* for contradictions to exist. Life and death are dualistic and contradictions- - it would hardly be proper to conclude that either should not continue to exist.

People are clearly creatures of contradiction; this may well be one of their defining characteristics! They are both individualists and highly social animals. They often compete, and they often collaborate and cooperate, especially when competing against other groups. Their sexual urges induce them to participate in the most ruthlessly sadistic and the most tenderly loving actions. When they become objectivists, they can be the most consistent kind of libertarian while they are the most dogmatic advocates of rationalistic regimentation. Aristotle's Law of Identity is often a great help in showing people when they are illogical and inconsistent. But who said that they should *never* be illogical and inconsistent? Mainly, I am afraid, the unrealistic objectivists.

(vi) That the pursuit of a contradiction can *never* be to a man's interest is a highly dubious proposition. Suppose, for example,

someone vigorously pursues both God and mammon. He wants to lead an ultra-religious, spiritual-minded life and to get into the Kingdom of Heaven after his death; and he also wants to amass a few million dollars on earth. So he breaks his neck, for half a century, to achieve these contradictory goals. He will almost certainly have a rough time!

But, a) he may actually make a pile of money, become a notable philanthropist, and convince himself that he has achieved the best of all possible worlds – wealthy and Godly. b) He may make a fortune and fail to achieve spirituality, or fail at moneymaking while succeeding at becoming spiritual, and he may find either of these solutions reasonably satisfying and still lead a good, though hardly perfect, existence. c) He may fail in business and also fail to achieve Godliness, but may be so vitally absorbed and enjoying all his life in striving for these two big goals that he may have a much better life than most people, with most “successes.” Granted that even though the individual who pursues a contradiction will *often* lose out, it is rash to conclude, as Rand does, that he *always* will.

(vii) The Law of Identity may be *one* consideration in the process of a man’s determining his interests but it had better not be the *only* or even *paramount* consideration. It is only a logical law; and it is hardly a great *determiner* of the individual’s best values and

interests. Even if it were as strictly true as Ayn Rand holds it to be-- and certainly the general semanticists and many other respectable brands of modern philosophers would seriously doubt this--it is hardly a magical law that tells people *what* interests they'd better select and *how* they should run their lives. It is a law to be used mainly for examining and not necessarily for creating human values.

18. "The virtue of *Rationality* means the recognition and acceptance of reason as one's only source of knowledge, one's only judge of values and one's only guide to action." Also it means one's total commitment to a state of full, conscious awareness, to the maintenance of a full concentration in all issues, in all choices, in all of one's waking hours (Rand, 1964).

Note those *only's* and those *alls*! In *my* waking hours, I have rarely seen such an extremist statement of the way humans *should* be. If *this* be rationality, I think I'll take some irrational spinach!

19. "There is no greater self-delusion than to imagine that one can render unto reason that which is reason's and unto faith that which is faith's." Faith cannot be circumscribed or limited. If you do surrender one's consciousness by an inch, you surrender your consciousness in total. Reason is an absolute to a mind or it is not an absolute. If it is not, there is no place to draw the line, no barrier faith cannot cross, and no part of your life faith cannot invade. You then

remain rational only until and unless your *feelings* decree otherwise," (Branden, 1965a).

This passage seems to oppose faith unfounded on fact and to uphold reason based on empirical observation. But Branden exaggeratedly says that (a) you can have *no* faith whatever in *anything*; (b) to believe anything whatever on faith is to stop thinking entirely; and that (c) reason is the *only* legitimate aspect of good thinking and that once you do not *unconditionally* accept it as such, you become an *absolute* slave to your whims. All these points, ironically, seem to have no empirical validation, to be accepted by the objectivists on faith rather than fact, and to be "true" because Rand and Branden strongly *feel* that they are. Moreover, Rand's assertions on capitalism, psychology, and everything else are to be taken on faith as absolute truth. Wherefore, in all this welter of hyperbole, art thou, reason?

20. Branden:

"Man's need of self-esteem entails the need for a sense of control over reality--but no control is possible in a universe which, by one's own concession, contains the supernatural, the miraculous and the causeless." This makes us at the mercy of ghosts and demons, in which we must deal, not with the *unknown*, but with the *unknowable*. We have

possible control if people propose, but a ghost disposes. A haunted house makes no control possible, (1965a).

Personally, I think that I make just about no concession to the supernatural, the miraculous and causeless, and to ghosts and demons. Not only do I think that such entities do not exist; but also I believe that the motivations of those who dream up their existence often are feelings of worthlessness and other severe manifestations of emotional disturbance. Nonetheless, I would by no means contend that those who do believe in mild, moderate, or massive aspects of supernaturalism have *no* control over reality. The capitalists readily accept the "invisible hand," decry paganism while advocating some variant of Judeo-Christian-Islam religious, and have considerable control over reality in spite of these contradictions and pure faith ideas.

I am reminded, in this connection, of Gregor Mendel, a Catholic monk and in his own way a true believer in much theological nonsense, who exerted a great deal of influence over biologists, psychologists, chemists, and other scientists.

So I can by no means go along with the catastrophizing objectivist notion that for one to believe in any aspect of faith unfounded on fact is to automatically surrender one's contact with and control over reality. In fact, I often am concerned about the degree of

contact with reality that the objectivists really retain--even though they ostensibly do not uphold a belief in supernatural entities.

21. Branden:

"Evasion, the refusal to think, the willful rejection of reason, the willful suspension of consciousness, the willful defiance of reality, is man's basic vice--the source of all his evils," (1965a).

All his evils? What about the evils attendant on people's conscious, volitional stupidity? What about the fact that people do have limited abilities? What about the evils resulting from their consciously, willfully and reasonably choosing to accept and live by an irrational creed, such as fanatical Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or objectivism? Again we have only grandiose logic and cherry-picked facts that create the objectivist fantasy.

Chapter 7

Ayn Rand's Religious Absolutism and Need for Certainty

One of the essences of religiosity is absolutism. The absolute, in philosophy, is defined (according to Webster's New World Dictionary,) as follows: "1. perfect. 2. complete; whole. 3. not mixed; pure. 4. not limited; not conditional; unrestricted: as, an *absolute* ruler. 5. positive; certain, definite. 6. actual; real; as an *absolute* truth. 7. not

dependent on anything else; considered without reference to anything else.” These seven definitions appear to boil down to two main ones: 1. certain, unlimited, unconditional, unproblematic, perfect; 2. positive, definite, actual, real.

The first of these main definitions of absolute seems to be semantically discriminating but empirically empty; while the second seems to be semantically indiscriminating but empirically full. Thus, if I use the first definition and say, “This statement is absolutely true,” I mean that the statement is unconditionally, certainly, perfectly true and that it will remain true for all time. I can easily differentiate *absolute*, when thus used, from non-absolute or limited; for it is quite different for me to say (a) “This statement is certainly and perfectly true” and (b) “This statement is probably and partially true.” However, my proposition that “This statement is certainly and perfectly true” cannot be empirically or scientifically validated, because it is possible (and probable) that future evidence will show that it is only partially true (or even untrue), and I cannot accurately predict that it will *always* remain perfectly true and *never* be proved partially untrue.

The second of the main definitions of absolute is fanatically religious and leads me to say such things as, “This statement is absolutely true” and to mean by it, “This statement is positively,

definitely, actually, and really true." If the statement actually *is* true, then the words "positively, actually and really..." are redundant and add no information to the bare, but equally valid, declaration, "This statement is true." However, the propositions "This statement is positively true" and "This statement is true," may be falsified, and possibly validated, at least partially, by empirical and scientific observations: For the factual evidence may merely show that up to the present time, this statement *is* true.

The scientific method, in other words, has not yet turned up any absolutes in the first (or semantically discriminating) use of that term because it purports to prove nothing as certain for all time and all circumstances. It is based on the highly conditional rule, if *x*, then *y* (*if* weighty objects that are thrown into the air virtually always fall down, *then* laws of gravity exist); and it can find evidence *against* holding a given hypothesis but it cannot unconditionally prove the truth of any hypothesis, (Feigl & Sellars, 1949; Popper, 1992).

Nonetheless, fanatical religionists almost invariably uphold some absolute--meaning some kind of faith unfounded on fact, some presumably certain and perfect superhuman entity or God. Probably the main reason so many billions of humans, from the beginning of history to date, have been fanatically religious, is that it seems far easier for most people to resort, in a slipshod manner, to certainties

and to gods as so-called explanations of the difficulties of reality, than it is for them to try to explain mysteries of the universe in more rigorous, verifiable and falsifiable, scientific terms. It is also exceptionally difficult for most people to accept that, as yet, we have no good explanation for many observed events and that some such events may, in fact, never be totally understood.

People, in other words, are creatures who find it hard to accept the real world of probability and chance, where nothing (including, especially, the events of their own life) seem to be unconditional and certain and where there is no perfect order of things on which they can rely. So they invent gods and certainties in an attempt to make life easier; and, sadly, in the process, they actually make things harder by taking their own limited power to reason and unnecessarily, significantly maim it. Or, as in the case of the "irreligious" objectivists, they refuse to acknowledge the fairly evident limitations of reason, and thereby unrealistically deify it and unduly make it less powerful than it need be. They thereby often become fanatically and devoutly religious.

Objectivism, though constantly masquerading under the rubric of reason and unrestricted thinking, is often almost as absolutistic (certainty-demanding), and hence strongly religious, as are most other existing theological systems. For by making reason into a necessity or

a god, one becomes highly irrational. Rational, by its standard definition, means (a) of, based on, or derived from reasoning; and (b) showing reason; not foolish or silly; sensible. Absolutes (certainties) are not based on sensible or pragmatic reasoning but on a special kind of theoretical reasoning: on arbitrary notions of the way things *should* or *must* be. They are not derived from empirical observations of reality (to which practical reasoning is invariably tied); but are often foolishly derived from the reasonless unrealistic demands that the universe *must* have certainties where none have thus far been shown to eternally exist. Here are some ways in which Ayn Rand's objectivism espouses absolutism of the perfectionist and certainty-demanding variety and becomes fanatically religious.

1. Branden repeats the objectivist principle that we previously examined:

"Either reason is an absolute to a mind or it is not--and if it is not, there is no place to draw the line, no principle by which to draw it, no barrier faith cannot cross, no part of one's life faith cannot invade." There are two possible meanings to Branden's use of the term *absolute* in this sentence: (a) if reason is not the absolute (ultimate) criterion of our decision-making, we are lost; and (b) if our

minds do not absolutely (perfectly, wholly) work according to the criteria of reason, we are again lost. (1963).

Even if we assume that Branden is employing the first of these meanings, his view, which he derives from Rand, does not quite make sense. For reason, when used as an ultimate or preferred criterion for decision-making, is itself not crystal-clear, unadulterated, or perfect. Suppose I decide to build my house on the bank of a river, not because I trust that God will prevent the river from flooding and ruining my house, but because I use reason as my criterion and conclude, after surveying all available facts, that the river has never overflowed its banks and therefore probably will not in the near future. As long as my reasoning is based on some amount of guesswork, probability, limited information, and my known strong preference for building my house on that bank, it will be swayed by *some* degree of "hope" or "faith." For any prediction or decision that is made on the basis of probability--as just about all rational decisions seem to be, due to the infinite possibilities in the universe--includes at least a minimum of "faith" that the unlucky will not happen; while decisions made on the basis of unreasonable or God-inspired notions include a maximum of "faith."

Branden and Rand strongly imply that, if reason is not always upheld as the ultimate criterion of decision-making, faith will

completely take over. This is true for some dogmatic religionists; but the majority is less fanatically religious, those who only sometimes employ reason as the ultimate criterion of truth or who even employ faith as this criterion, and much of their lives is actually quite sensible. Blind faith hardly pervades every aspect of their being. Even Mohammed said, "Praise God, but tether your camel!"

If Branden means by his statement that reason must be accepted *completely*, for, if our minds do not absolutely (perfectly, wholly) work according to the criteria of reason, we are lost, and then he is himself lost. For his contention then would be that, if we do not accept reason as perfect, we can never say what kind of action is reasonable and we can never rid ourselves of blind faith. This seems to be false, for we can estimate what kind of action is reasonable and we can eliminate blind faith if we merely believe--as I, for one, do--that there is a *high probability* that reason is a better or more sensible standard to employ than is arbitrary faith. Or, stated otherwise, we can regulate our lives largely by reasoning and also at times try regulating them by some kind of religious faith. Then we can empirically and pragmatically observe *what the chances are* that the first alternative leads to better results than the second, and we can finally conclude that reason generally seems to lead to much better results than does faith.

The supposed *necessity* of our accepting reason as an absolute (perfect) criterion of decision-making stems not from our inability to differentiate between rationality and faith if we fail to do so, but from Rand's and the objectivists' acute need for absolutes (certainties)--which I would surmise, is a concomitant of their *blind faith* in absolutism!

2. "Objectivism...is the principle that reality is objective and absolute, that it exists independent of anyone's consciousness, perceptions, beliefs, wishes, hopes or fears--that that which is, is what it is--that 'existence is identity'--that A is A," (Branden, 1965b).

Here again Branden seems to use the term *absolute* in two ways, both of which get him, and Rand, into serious difficulties. The first of his possible meanings is: that reality is absolute--meaning that it is given, and that it merely exists objectively, apart from human consciousness. This seems to be a sensible enough statement and probably can be sustained by empirical observation, as Bishop Berkeley acknowledged the Egyptian astronomers had mapped the starry heavens thousands of years before his time, and that their maps were still valid, even though they had long since been dead.

The trouble with the statement that "reality is absolute" is that it says very little, is partially tautological, and leads largely to even more tautological observations such as "that which is, is what it is,"

"existence is identity," and "A is A." For if we truly exist and are conscious, it is likely that we exist *somewhere*, and that external reality is an integral part of our existence (as the existentialists contend). So the statement that *some* kind of reality exists apart from (though, also, along with) humans is hardly a striking statement. And such concomitant propositions as "existence exists," and "A is A," that the objectivists make so much of; do not seem to say much. Even if these propositions are absolutely (that is, evidently) true, they are not exceedingly important, and hardly are the basis for the subsequent conclusions which the objectivists attach to them: that capitalism must prevail, that individualism is sacred, and that democracy has to exist.

If Branden's statement is taken more strictly (as his words imply) to mean that reality is absolute (certain) and that an incontrovertible proof of the existence of the external world, entirely apart from humans, is available, then it makes almost absolute nonsense. For the only way for us to prove that external reality has some kind of objective existence entirely apart from our own consciousness, perceptions, and beliefs is for us to consciously, perceptively, and cognitively *appraise* the universe's objective existence in relation to our own being. *We* have to do the thinking *about* the external reality and its presumed existence. Scientifically, moreover, we only seem able to conclude, after doing this thinking,

that it is *highly probable*, and not that it is *absolutely certain*, that the universe exists independently of ourselves.

The very concept "exist" is a human proposition and might well be meaningless to some being from another planet. All our concepts and realities depend on our perceptual-cognitive apparatus and therefore are not independently or absolutely provable. The *ideas* that "existence exists," "existence is identify," and "A is A" are all human notions that could actually disappear from the universe if no people were around to think them and "prove" them. Consequently, the term *absolute*, when used in the sense of that which is thought of as existing in and by itself, without relation to anything else, is rather meaningless; for how can we think of anything as absolute when, in the very process of thinking of it, we make it at least somewhat dependent on our being alive and choosing to think of it?

It is interesting--indeed, fascinating!--that the objectivists frequently use terms such as *absolute* in idiosyncratic ways that relatively few other writers or speakers employ; and that they appear to do so for propagandistic reasons. Thus, instead of saying something like "reality is given," they say, "reality is absolute." By so doing, they often appear to be (a) more profound than they actually are; (b) more original than they truly are; (c) shored up by the

connotations of the words they use--so that, for instance, they seem to be *absolutely* (utterly certainly) correct.

It is interesting to note, in this respect, that many religious groups behave similarly in their word choice. Thus, some modern liberal Protestant and Jewish groups no longer mean, by the term *religion* that they believe in supernatural gods to whom people are to pray. They mean, instead, that they believe in certain ethical philosophies of living, such as "The Golden Rule." Technically, if they were to be semantically clear, they might admit that "We are no longer religious, in the old sense of the term; we are, instead, highly ethical." But they prefer to keep the words *religion* and *religious* for their ethical systems, because such terms appear to be more profound and absolute than terms like *ethics* and *ethical*, and for other emotional reasons.

When Rand and the objectivists, therefore, use terms like *absolute* they are to some extent sailing under false covers; for they do not entirely mean *complete, perfect, unconditional, or certain*. But they enjoy the overtones and undertones of these stronger absolutistic meanings; they trap themselves into wittingly or unwittingly including these religion-oriented connotations in their philosophizing; and they draw to themselves huge numbers of fanatic, dogmatic absolutists who enthusiastically *want* to hear these certainty-toned meanings.

3. "Man's life, his freedom, his happiness are *his* by inalienable right.... If life on earth is his purpose, he has a *right* to live as a rational being: nature forbids him the irrational" (Rand, 1957).

Rand seems to mean at least two different things by this statement --both of which are religious-minded and illegitimate. If her statement is to be taken literally, then she seems to mean that nature gives humans an inalienable right to life, freedom, and happiness, and forbids them from behaving irrationally.

This, of course, is ridiculous. An inalienable right, according to Webster's New World Dictionary, is one "that cannot be taken away or transferred." Clearly, unless one believes in an almighty God, there are no such rights: Human's life, freedom, and happiness can all easily be taken away from them and frequently are. So inalienable rights are , or non-provable absolutes.

Rand continues: "If life on earth is his purpose, he has a *right* to live as a rational being." This implies that life on earth need *not* be people's purpose. They could want to die rather than to live. Their so-called inalienable right to life, freedom, and happiness, therefore, is obviously theirs *by choice* and not by any intrinsic order of the universe. Since this right is *conditional* on people's wanting and accepting it, how can it be *inalienable*?

As for nature forbidding people the irrational, what rot that is! The universe patently allows, and to a large extent even encourages, us to be exceptionally irrational and still want to survive. In the last chapter of *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*, I list twenty-seven basic biosocial ways in which people, in every time and every clime, have tended to be easily and persistently irrational and illogical; and for years I have been collecting so much evidence of fundamental human irrationality that it will ultimately take several volumes to encompass this material (Ellis, 1962,1976, 2001b). The objectivists, in their determination to uphold absolutistic rationality, simply ignore a plethora of data that contradicts their views.

If a second--and more charitable--interpretation is given to Rand's statement, then she seems to be saying that human beings have rights which ought not to be taken away *by others* and that if these rights are taken away from them they will, because of the manner in which they are naturally made, suffer. But even this proposition is false on at least two major counts:

a. It is probably safe to say that *it would be better* if human beings did not deprive others of life, freedom, and happiness--because (i) they will tend to lose their own lives, freedom, and happiness in the process and (ii) even if they gained personally, the effect of their actions on humanity as a whole would be undesirable. But the fact

that *it would be better* for people to act a certain way does not mean that therefore they *absolutely ought* (or *should* or *must*) do so. No one can truly tell people that they *ought* to do what *would be better* for them to do. Rand's phrase, *inalienable right*, even when viewed in its most toned-down form, still strongly implies necessity or God.

b. Even if it is better for human beings not to deprive others of life, freedom, and happiness, it is rather silly to say that if they do so these others will, because of the manner in which they are naturally made, suffer. First of all, depriving you of life and happiness will, practically by definition, make you suffer; for who is going to be happy when dead? And who is going to be happy if deprived of happiness? Secondly, depriving you of freedom will not necessarily make you suffer. Some individuals--including some actual slaves--seem to thrive on lack of freedom; and many people--such as lovers who deliberately enslave themselves to their beloveds--actively seek out dependency. So, human nature merely tends to make us suffer in many, though hardly all, instances when we are deprived of freedom. Our nature *also* provides us with distinct compensations for slavery and dependency. This may be a sad commentary on what being human ordinarily means; but it is nonetheless accurate.

4. "The man who...declares that there are no absolutes and believes that he escapes responsibility, is the man responsible for all

the blood that is now spilled in the world.” Just as reality is an absolute, existence is an absolute, a speck of dust is an absolute and so is human life. Whether you live or die is an absolute. (Rand, 1957).

What this statement seems to mean is that it is an observable fact that reality, existence, a speck of dust, and human life and death exist. If Rand wants to define an absolute as something that exists and that can be observed by humans, that is her prerogative; but this is not the usual meaning of the term as it is commonly employed by most people most of the time. Rather, it is generally taken to mean that which is thought of as existing in and by itself, without relation to anything else. It also means an event or characteristic that exists under *all* circumstances for *all* times. Moreover, the word *absolute* has (as I noted above) high-sounding, pompous connotations; and that is why, in regular English discourse, virtually no one calls any observable fact an absolute. Rand’s usage is, to say the least, peculiar! Even if we translate her statement into more understandable English, it seems to make little sense. For it then becomes: “The person who...declares that there are no observable facts and believes that he escapes responsibility, is the person responsible for all the blood that is now spilled in the world. Reality is a fact, existence is a fact, a speck of dust is a fact and so is human life. Whether you live or die is a fact.” There are several difficulties with this reworded statement:

a. Who *is* the person who declares that there are no observable facts? Perhaps a few psychotics exist who do so, but it is doubtful that these few are “responsible for all the blood that is now spilled in the world.”

b. There are surely people who deny certain (though hardly all) observable facts, and thereby escape from responsibility. Psychopaths, like Hitler, for example, deny that non-Aryans are pretty much the same kind of people as Aryans, and they irresponsibly persecute and kill non-Aryans. Even so, it is improbable that *all* the blood that is now spilled in the world is spilled by this kind of irresponsible person. It is much more likely that a great deal of blood is spilled because people in positions of responsibility make grave errors of judgment, as human beings frequently do, even when they look closely at observable facts.

c. Ayn Rand implies that irresponsible, blood-spilling people never admit that reality is a fact and that existence, a speck of dust, and human life are also facts. It seems to me that some of the most irresponsible individuals in history--such as many despots of the past and present--are grim realists who admit that reality, existence, a speck of dust, and human life are facts, but who use these facts to enhance their own antisocial interests.

d. Although Ayn Rand prefers the term *absolute* when she speaks of hard facts, the irony is that people whom we normally call absolutists--such as fanatical religionists, fascists, and Nazis--are far more responsible for hostility and bloodshed than are non-absolutists. And although Rand professes, as a believer in "absolutes," that she is entirely against violence and coercion, the heroes of her novels fairly regularly use violence and coercion against their enemies, and her cause seems to attract a great many individuals who are truly absolutistic in their thinking and who have clear-cut fascist-Nazi leanings.

5. Rand states: No matter what remnants of Platonism existed in Aristotle's system, his incomparable achievement was that he defined the *basic* principles of a rational view of existence and of man's consciousness. He noted that people perceive *one* reality "exists as an *objective* absolute (which means: independently of the consciousness, the wishes or the feelings of any perceiver)." People's consciousness is to *perceive*, not to create, reality. Abstractions are their method of integrating their sensory material by using their minds as their only tool of knowledge. Knowing that A is A, (1961b).

There are several weaknesses in this argument of Rand and her supposed mentor, Aristotle:

a. Rand first states that there is only one reality, the one which humans perceive. Then she states that it exists as an objective absolute, independently of the consciousness of any perceiver. One implication here is that reality *absolutely* exists, entirely independent of human's perception (and presumably without reference to anything else). Another implication is that it *certainly*, without any doubt whatever, exists. Both these implications appear to go beyond observable facts. If reality *absolutely* exists, entirely independent of people's perception and consciousness, they can never truly *know* this and can only *surmise* it. They only know it (and, for that matter, surmise it) through being conscious. If reality is assumed to exist *certainly*, without any doubt whatever about its existence, this again is something that people (with their limited ability to perceive and conceive) cannot very well prove--as Immanuel Kant showed. Reality *probably* exists, apart from people's perception of it; but why *must* it?

The one sense in which reality may be said to *absolutely* (entirely independent of people's perception,) and *certainly* exist, is definitional and tautological. We can say that reality is a necessary concomitant of people, since they cannot exist in themselves but have to exist in *some* kind of external reality. Therefore, people's existence

necessarily proves the existence of reality. But even this axiomatic defining of reality's "absolute" existence rests on human definition and proves nothing about the external world. It seems much safer for us to conclude, on the basis of our observing people's behavior in the world and the consequences that accrue from such behavior, that reality *most probably* exists independently of people and that they are forced to abide by many of its dictates; but the Randian position in this regard seems always to want to go far beyond this probabilistic kind of statement and to make absolutistic, certain, fanatically religious statements about the nature of reality.

b. Even if we translate Rand's views of reality into probabilistic form, we seem to run into trouble. For she contends that there is only *one* reality, the one which people perceive--when, of course, there may be *many* realities: those that different people perceive and those that are perceived by nonhumans. And she holds that people's minds are their *only* tool of knowledge, when it may well be their main but not necessarily only tool of perceiving and knowing. Therefore, if Rand is contending that reality *most probably* has an existence independent of man, she still tends to perceive things in monolithic, rigid ways which are highly non-probabilistic. She (and numerous of her enthusiastic followers) seems to be allergic to any kind of pluralism. There are probably *many* truths in the universe; but

she generally sees just one. And in this respect she is more Platonic than Aristotelian!

6. "The task of resisting an Attila can be accomplished only by men of intransigent conviction and moral certainty," (Rand, 1961b). Here, without giving us much chance to cavil about interpretation or meaning, Rand comes out strongly for complete lack of compromise and for certainty; therefore, she is clearly absolutistic in the most extreme sense of that term. She also points out, the task of resisting an Attila can be accomplished *only* by men of intransigent conviction and moral certainty; and thereby adds one absolute to another. It seems to me that the Attila's of the world--or those who use brute force to subdue others who disagree with their views--precisely *are* people of intransigent conviction and moral certainty; as are virtually all fanatical religionists, true believers, and rigid authoritarians. By calling themselves "men of intransigent conviction and moral certainty" I think that Rand and the objectivists are making, even better than I can, the main point of this chapter: Fanatical objectivists thoroughly believe in absolutes and cannot really be distinguished, in this respect, from rigid religionists (not to mention fascists and authoritarians).

7. "As a being of volitional consciousness, (man) knows that he must know his own value in order to maintain his own life. He

knows that he has to be *right*; to be wrong in action means danger to his life; to be wrong in person, to be *evil* means to be unfit for existence," (Rand, 1961b). These absolutistic statements are mistaken on the following counts:

a. People can definitely not know their own values; or they can devalue themselves, and still maintain their own life. They may not, in these circumstances, have a good or enjoyable life; but they will usually survive.

b. People do not have to be *right* even though being wrong in action means danger to their life. For one thing, they *can* live when they are in danger. For another, what *is* being right in action? Does it consist merely of doing the kind of thing that leads to survival? If so, people would tend to learn what is *right* after they have made a good many mistakes and have done what was *wrong*. But by this time they would presumably be dead--and quite unteachable!

c. How can an individual be wrong *in person*? He can surely do wrong or evil *acts*. But if he *as a person* is evil, he would then be the kind of individual who *invariably* does wrong acts. And is there, really, such an individual? If there is any practical way of rating humans globally, as people, on the basis of their right and wrong acts, Rand and the objectivists have not yet come up with its details. Yet,

with typical absoluteness, they are sure that there *must be* such a way.

d. Even if we could rate individuals globally, and accurately determine that they were evil as people--as many people rate Hitler, Stalin, and Osama bin Laden--how could we then prove that this means they are unfit for existence? Actually, "evil people" might be well fit for existence--might survive much better, in this irrational world, than "good people." The only indubitable way that we could prove that "evil people" are unfit for existence is to say that they *do not deserve* to exist because of their evilness. But *who* is to say that (i) they are unquestionably evil and (ii) they therefore do not deserve to exist? Only, obviously, God or Ayn Rand!

8. Says Nathaniel Branden, "Ayn Rand's basic conviction is that evil, by its nature, is impotent, that only the good--the rational--can ultimately triumph." (1965b).

That would be lovely--if true! But the only way in which evil could be absolutely impotent and good absolutely triumphant, would be for there to be an immanent order of things that would insure this--and that immanent order, of course, would be God.

Clearly, this is not so. Evil is not only potent; as cynics have often noted, it is practically omnipotent. And there is no reason whatever why the good will ultimately triumph. If we are wise and

hardworking, we will usually *make* the good win out over the bad. But we don't have to be either wise or hardworking--we don't have to be, in fact, anything.

9. Ayn Rand: "Man's life, as required by his nature, is not the life of a mindless brute, of a looting thug or a mooching mystic, but the life of a thinking being--not life by means of force or fraud, but life by means of achievement--not survival at any price, since there's only one price that pays for man's survival: reason," (1951).

There are several cogent reasons why Rand and her noble hero, John Galt, are off here:

a. If a person can be a mindless brute, a looting thug, or a mooching mystic, this is obviously in his/her nature as well as being a thinking person and a wonderful achiever is also in his/her nature. Whatever a person can be is "natural" to her/him, and it is foolish to declare, absolutely, that only *one* particular mode of conduct is required by her/his nature. If this were so, this would be *all* s/he would ever be; and the objectivists would hardly have to *urge* him/her to be who s/he "naturally" is!

b. The idea of "human nature" is largely false, if by it is meant, man *must* operate and evolve in a specific manner. Although animals have specific instincts, which drive them to perform in certain ways, humans largely have what Abraham Maslow called "instinctoid

tendencies,” which means that it is easier for them to do x than y, but that nonetheless they can often choose, and engage in enough work and practice, so that it becomes quite easy and enjoyable for them to do y rather than x, (Ellis, 1973, 2001b, 2003).

Rand’s objectivist view is a result of an *essentialist* instead of an *existentialist* philosophy of life. As James Elliott notes in this connection: “If the philosophy which defends the primacy of *existence* is called *existentialism*, it would be reasonable to expect that the philosophy which holds the opposite view--that essence precedes existence--would be called *essentialism*, and that is the case. To Plato, for example, the really real world is a world of essences, or ideas, and existence is merely a kind of insubstantial image of these essences. What this boils down to is that wherever you find a once-and-for-all answer to the question, *What does it mean to be a human being?*, there you find essentialism. Wherever you find an affirmation of man’s *radical* freedom and openness, his power to invent himself and transform himself *indefinitely*, there you find existentialism.”

Rand and the objectivists are more in the Platonic than in the Aristotelian camp; for they do believe in absolute Truth, Beauty, and Reason. For my part, I’ll stick, existentially, with the concept of ever-changeable humans, and forget about their supposed inner natures, which drive them to “inevitable” reason and achievement.

c. If people have any nature that requires them to behave in a certain manner, there is a much better chance, considering their history, that this nature *does* drive them to survival at any price rather than to the objectivist nirvana of rationality and achievement. There seems to be more chance that we are born with the Original Sin of lethargy and thoughtlessness than with the halo of objectivist devotion to productiveness.

10. "By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man--every man--is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose." (Rand, 1957).

If people truly exist for their own sake, then they are *not* absolutely beholden to the nature of reality and of life. They of course have to make *some kind* of peace with life if they are to survive and to make *some* compromises with reality if they are to be happy. But, if they really exist for their own sake--which is quite an existentialist notion--then they are not too beholden to their inner nature. That they are so beholden is, (as we noted above,) an essentialist notion.

If people, again, exist for their own sake, they *may or may not* make happiness their highest moral purpose. They may, if they wish, make productivity, creativity, self-sacrifice, or almost anything else they want (including, even, the romantic love-death of Tristan and

Isolde) their highest moral purpose. For *their own* sake, they may do practically any damned thing they please--and Rand and the objectivists take the hindmost!

Actually, objectivism only gives lip service to the notion of people existing for their own sake, and clearly believes (as we have seen time and again throughout this book) that they exist to compete strongly with others, to become producers of goods, to build an absolutely 100 per cent free market, and to save their soul by working their asses off to achieve all the noble objectives which Ayn Rand and her followers insist they must attain.

11. "If a man is to live, he must recognize that facts are facts, that A is A, that *existence* exists--that reality is an absolute, not to be evaded or escaped--and that the task of his mind is to perceive it, that *this* is his primary responsibility. 'A rational process is a *moral* process'" (Branden, 1965b).

This is so contradictory that it is really funny! First of all, if reality *is* an absolute, it can't *possibly* be evaded or escaped. A is A and God is God; and if God absolutely rules that reality is inexorable and it cannot be escaped--well, then, that's that, and there's no use arguing the matter. Under these conditions, Rand and the objectivists would merely be "carrying coals to Newcastle" by reminding people that they cannot escape reality and exhorting them to follow it.

Whether or not they remind or exhort them, these people are absolutely, finally cooked!

Secondly, Rand and the objectivists do not seem to realize that the Law of Identity, or the statement that A is A, is itself not an absolute, but is contingent on other things. As I pointed out previously, the very statement, "A is A," is a human statement, which is a shorthand way of stating, "Because I (or some other person) consistently observe that which I perceive today, is the same kind of object as I perceive tomorrow and the next day, there is a very high degree of probability that today's A is essentially the same thing as tomorrow's A *for me*, and that therefore I can reasonably conclude that A is A." If there were no human creatures around, A might still really *be* A; but it is unlikely that the statement, "A is A," would be meaningful. Its *meaning* resides in *humans*.

Moreover, the statement, "A is A," really seems to mean that "If A represents some person or thing or idea which has an objective existence in the world, *then* at any given moment of time and extension in space it is pretty certain that A will not also be not-A." If, however, A is my own hallucination and does not really exist, or if A quickly changes from one form to another, or if A symbolically represents several different things at the same time (as a circle may represent a ring, a hoop, a geometrical figure, a female phallic figure,

etc.), then A may not exactly be A, but may be something different each time or may even be a figment of human imagination.

The point is that only by definition is A always A, exactly A, never any aspect of not-A. The statement, "A is A" is really a contingent statement as far as reality is concerned; and it only becomes absolute when we *define* it so. Moreover, at the very moment that we *make* the statement, "A is A" absolutely true, it becomes meaningless, unrelated to objective reality, and capable of adding little or nothing to our knowledge of the world.

Third, the statement, "A is A" has much more relevance when it is applied to inanimate objects than when it applies to living, changing organisms. A stone is a stone; and unless something unusual happens to it, it will take hundreds or thousands of years before it disintegrates and becomes a stone no longer. A stone, again, is not likely to be something other than a stone--such as a tree or a blade of grass.

This is not quite true of humans. A human is a person; but *as* a person she is likely to be many things, as Robert Hartman shows. Thus, the very same person can be a husband, a teacher, a commuter, an eater, a sleeper, a walker, a driver, an investor, a father, and many other "things." Moreover, s/he can easily be a poor driver today, a fair one tomorrow, and an excellent one a year from now. Or he can be a fine father today and an execrable one a month from today. His or her

humanness, therefore, is a quite variable thing. A person not only differs radically from other people in many respects, but significantly differs from himself or herself at different times and in different circumstances.

The objectivist point, therefore, that "reality is an absolute, not to be evaded or escaped," merely seems to mean, when translated into practical terms, that a person lives in a real world where certain facts *tend* to exist; and that if s/he would live happily, s/he might take note of these facts. Or, stated otherwise: *It is highly probable* that s/he will lead a more enjoyable life if s/he is open-minded and accepting of certain aspects of reality than if s/he is close-minded and refuses to face these facts. Although this statement *now* seems to be true, it is far from the implied meaning of the Randian phrase, "reality is an absolute."

Another reason why looking upon reality as an absolute is inefficient is that one of the main assets of people is their ability to *change* reality. They cannot, of course, change it completely; but they often can take a pretty grim reality--such as the fact that s/he is cold and hungry--and change it into a pretty good one. If reality is seen as an absolute, and A is always viewed as being and remaining A, people's ability to change it may tend to get lost in the shuffle.

When Branden cites Ayn Rand to the effect that "a rational process is a *moral* process," he and she are again absolutistic. If they mean that by using one's reason people will *usually* help themselves live a better life that is one thing. But if they mean that rationality, in and of itself, *is* moral, that is quite another thing. Rationality is a tool that humans use--as is science. And both reason and science can be used for immoral as well as moral ends. Moral people, in my estimation, (a) are kind to themselves and avoid trying to defeat their own ends and (b) try to refrain from needlessly harming others. In so behaving, I believe that they are eminently *reasonable* (Ellis, 1973, 1994). But they can nonetheless use their reasoning powers to come up with all kinds of unreasonable moral tenets--as I think Rand and the objectivists do. Among the main instigators of immorality--of people's needless cruelty to himself and others--are authoritarianism and absolutism.

Chapter 8

Definitional and Fanatically Religious Thinking

In addition to resorting to all-or-nothing-ism or absolutism, virtually all fanatically religious people indulge in considerable tautological or definitional thinking. For there is no way of empirically proving a highly fanatical, faith-motivated creed; if there were, it would rise out of the realm of faith into that of science and no longer be religiously devout.

Rand's philosophy bases most of its premises on highly tautological thinking. Here are a few examples:

1. "Thinking is man's only basic virtue, from which all the others proceed....Non-thinking is an act of annihilation, a wish to negate existence, an attempt to wipe out reality." (Rand, 1957). However existence exists and, instead of being wiped out, reality will wipe out the wiper. If people are rational, life directs their actions. If they are irrational, the premise directing their actions is death.

This statement defines thinking as life-producing and virtuous and defines non-thinking as death-producing and unvirtuous. Rand tautologically states that people who like life are rational and those who invite death are irrational. Instead of empirically observing that if people enjoy life they will probably live better by thinking than by non-

thinking behavior, she devoutly (and religiously) states that they *must* want to live and therefore *must* be rational.

The tautological statement that existence exists--which is no more meaningful than the statement that water is water--then implies that this is evidence for the conclusion that life is good and death is bad. Actually, the declaration that existence exists is evidence for practically nothing; and the conclusions that life is good and death is bad do not stem from this axiom. Life is not good because we exist but because we *think* that existing is good. We could also think that existence is bad and that death is good: and, although Rand would doubtlessly be horrified by such a thought, we would still be entitled to think it.

If one of my clients comes to me and asks, "Why is existence good? Why should I not kill myself instead of continuing to live?" I am likely to reply: "Because if you continue to exist, and if you behave in a certain way while you are existing, the chances are that you will derive significantly more pleasure than pain, and you will therefore (since you are prejudiced in favor of pleasure) want to keep living." If my client insists that pleasure is meaningless to him and that consequently life has no value, I will try to show him how to give his life a meaning (through receiving pleasure or through some other means); and, usually, I will succeed. But if he persists in finding

pleasure and life meaningless, then I may have to accord him the right to favor death over life. In fact, it is just possible that he will be rational in so doing. I think that it would be very irrational for me to commit suicide, since I enjoy living and think that my satisfactions distinctly outweigh my pains; but I would be foolish to judge, as Rand invariably does, everybody else by my own tastes and standards.

2. "There is a morality of reason, a morality to man, and Man's Life is its standard of value. All that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good; all that which destroys it is the evil," (Rand, 1957).

Here again, life is defined as being good; and it is assumed that reason necessarily sustains life, and therefore, a morality based on reason must be absolutely valid. Actually, human life can be defined as bad, (particularly since most humans seem to be anxious and miserable much of the time and are frequently engaged in destroying the lovely animal and inanimate world in which they exist).

Even if life is accepted as being good, reason--which the dictionary defines as the ability to think, form judgments, draw conclusions, cogitate in a logical manner--can easily be used to destroy rather than preserve it, (as many competent fascist and democratic rulers have demonstrated!). Given a certain value judgment--such as the idea that human life is valuable--a morality

based on reason can probably be constructed. But without our making such à priori, and basically unprovable, value judgments, it is unlikely that there can be any morality of reason per se.

3. “Love is our response to our highest values--and can be nothing else” (Rand, 1957). This is a classical definitional--and meaningless--statement. First of all, what are our highest values? Are they the values dearest to the hearts of objectivists, the rational emotive behavior therapists, Nazis, social democrats, romanticists, realists? I am sure that Rand is positive about what they are. But will the rest of us completely agree with her?

Secondly, even if we agree with Rand’s highest values, we fit love onto a procrustean bed. Thus, if we agree that selfishness is the highest value people can hold, and if someone then selfishly monopolizes the goods on an island and forces all the other residents of the community to starve or live in extreme poverty, we shall have to agree that, since Rand responds well to her own highest values, she must indubitably love herself and others dearly!

Or if we agree that sacrifice is the highest value this same person can hold, and she then gives all her produce to others and starves herself to death, we shall have to agree that, since she responds well to her own highest value, she must love herself and others. No matter what we accept as people’s highest values, her

following such values consistently will make her an exceptionally loving person--if we accept Ayn Rand's definition. Or will it?

This kind of tautological thinking seems to be a sorry waste of time--and to me it does not sound very rational. It starts with the axiom that emotions are based on values, that love is an emotion, and that love is a special kind of emotion that is integrally related to our highest (and presumably our most beneficial) values. But the axiom is never checked to see whether there is any good reason for believing in it; and certain conclusions from it are merely assumed to be true because the premise is also assumed to be correct. Thus, it is concluded that because love is a response to our highest values (an axiomatic assumption) it can be nothing else (an extension of the same unproved assumption). Where are empiricism and science--that is, search for knowledge by observation and experimentation--in all this circular thinking? Answer: Nowhere.

In actual life, of course, love is frequently not our response to our highest values, however much Rand may claim that it can be nothing else. Love—which might consist of a man's obsessive-compulsive love for a vapid woman with massive breasts--can be our response to some of our "lowest" values—and it often is. But the objectivists will immediately contend that such love is not real love.

No, they will say: Real love can only be our response to our highest values--that is what makes it real. Q.E.D.--an arbitrary definition.

As soon as we say that love, hate, freedom, slavery, rationality, or anything else can be nothing else but so-and-so, we are defining rather than discovering what it is. For how would we ever possibly know that love is nothing else but a response to our highest values unless we were absolutely sure that it could be nothing else? And how could we be sure except by some kind of arbitrary definition?

Love, empirically observed, may be a hundred or a thousand things. Tautologically defined, it can be practically anything we want it to be. Rand wants it to be nothing else but response to our highest (meaning, objectivist-endorsed) values. So she *makes* it so.

4. "Accept the fact that the achievement of your happiness is the only moral purpose of your life and that happiness--not pain or mindless self-indulgence--is the proof of your moral integrity, since it is the proof and the result of your loyalty to the achievement of your values," (Rand, 1957).

At least, in this statement, happiness, rather than mere survival, is taken as the greatest good that humans can attain. So that is some improvement over the usual Randian ruling!

The statement itself, however, is still tautological, since for the word happiness virtually any other human trait could just as logically

be substituted. Suppose you are an individual who has reasoned, to your own satisfaction, that modern life is too hard and that the game is hardly worth the candle the way it is usually played. You therefore decide that your highest value will be mindless self-indulgence and that you will live on a low standard of income and spend most of your days smoking marijuana.

You can then, with great tautological justification, change Ayn Rand's above statement so that it reads as follows:

"Accept the fact that the achievement of your mindless self-indulgence is the only moral purpose of your life, and that mindless self-indulgence--and not pain or other kinds of happiness--is the proof of your moral integrity, since it is the proof and result of your loyalty to the achievement of your values."

Does this revised statement make any less sense than Rand's statement, which is quoted from *Atlas Shrugged*? Not a whit. Both statements are tautologies and are pretty meaningless. Neither happiness nor mindless self-indulgence has anything to do with moral purpose--unless, by definition, you insist that it does.

Nor, need loyalty to the achievement of your values have any necessary connection with your morality, although it may have a lot to do with your integrity or consistency. Morality normally means the character of (a) being in accord with the principles or standards of

right conduct--or, more specifically, the character of having enlightened self-interest--and (b) not needlessly harming or coercing other human beings (because of your basic self-interest when you *choose* to live socially). Integrity means the quality or state of being whole, consistent, and sincere. Suppose, however, that your "morality" holds that the free market is a terrible thing, that Randian objectivists are therefore awful people, that any true-blue objectivist should be killed on sight, and that anyone who is suspected of being an objectivist sympathizer should be murdered immediately. No doubt, you may be very consistent, and even honest and sincere, in holding this "morality." You would therefore have integrity. But would you have moral integrity--or the character of being in accord with the principles or standards of right conduct? I, an anti-Randian, would hardly think so; and I seriously doubt whether Ms. Rand or Mr. Branden would cheer you on!

Rand and Branden are continually condemning collectivists, statists, mystics, etc. But if a collectivist or one of these other "villains" is truly loyal to the achievement of his own values, does he then not have integrity, and should not Rand respect him as a highly moral individual, even though she disagrees with his views? Suppose, moreover, the collectivist works in a highly disciplined manner at his ideology, and suppose he is quite happy in the course of his lifetime of

collectivist involvements. Isn't he, then, by Rand's definition, clearly a person of high moral integrity? Why, then, should she damn him so savagely?

5. "If life--existence--is not accepted as one's standard, then only one alternative standard remains: non-existence. But non-existence--death--is not a standard of value; it is the negation of values. The man who does not wish to hold life as his goal and standard is free not to hold it; but he cannot claim the sanction of reason; he cannot claim that his choice is as valid as any other," (Rand, 1965a).

This typical Randian tautology starts with the assumption that people must have a standard of values; that they must value life or death; that if they value death they really do not value; and that therefore they must value life. This is something like saying that people must believe; that they must believe in God or in atheism; that if they are atheists they are really nonbelievers; and that therefore they must believe in God! Some objections to this conclusion are these:

a. There is no reason why people must have a standard of values, since they could exist (as lower animals seem to do) without one. They are an animal species that tends to evaluate and to have some pretty rigid standards by which they evaluate. But they could

refuse to evaluate; they could have shifting standards; they could have all kinds of conflicts and contradictions in their value judgments (in fact, they almost invariably do!), and they could evaluate in a number of ways that seem impossible for the one-sided Randians to imagine.

b. People don't have to value life or death, because they could pick an in-between state, such as a state of drug-induced unconsciousness or semi-consciousness. They usually believe that either life or death is to be highly valued; but they do have some leeway in this respect: They may alternate between valuing life or death; they may value both of them moderately; or they may be so bland that they merely exist and hardly intensely value either life or death.

c. It is a deep prejudice to say that if a man values death he has no standard of value, since he definitely does have one. Once he actually dies or kills himself, he no longer values anything; but while he is still living, his placing a high value on suffering, sacrifice, death, or anything else is legitimate (even though it may be idiosyncratic and "crazy").

d. If a woman values death over life, she may still claim the sanction of reason for doing so (as we noted above): since she may

come to the honest and sane realization that life, for her, is simply not worth living.

For the foregoing reasons, Rand's (and Branden's) prime philosophies in regard to life and the evaluating process, consist of one assumption after another, with no empirical evidence backing any of these assumptions. The grain of sense that lies behind the immoderately stated objectivist position would seem to be this: If you choose to value and choose to value life above death, there is a high probability that you can use your reasoning powers to enhance your chances of living and decrease your chances of dying. But this revised view is a far cry from the tautological and absolutistic Randian formulation cited above.

6. "A society that robs an individual of the product of his effort, or enslaves him, or attempts to limit the freedom of his mind, or compels him to act against his own rational judgment--a society that sets up a conflict between its edicts and the requirements of man's nature--is not, strictly speaking, a society, but a mob held together by institutionalized gang rule," (Rand, 1964).

It is here assumed, without evidence, that nature necessitates a person's being capitalistic, politically free, and utterly rational. However, when the facts show that many societies seriously interfere with capitalism, political freedom, and human rationality (and

therefore presumably deny a person's presumed nature), Rand stoutly refuses to acknowledge that these are truly societies. For all her pejoratives, however, "a mob held together by institutionalized gang-rule" is a society. It may not be a very good or efficient society but it exists.

7. "Reason requires freedom, self-confidence and self-esteem. It requires the right to think and to act on the guidance of one's thinking--the right to live by one's own independent judgment," (Rand, 1964).

Reason, obviously, requires nothing but reasoning--which may be good (helping your goals) or bad (sabotaging your goals). You can reason yourself into slavery, lack of confidence, and suicide--if these are your goals. What Rand might say here, if she wants to make sense, is that if you want to be free and self-confident, you will be much more likely to obtain these goals by good reasoning than by following unquestioning pathways. Reason, however, necessitates freedom and self-confidence only by arbitrary definition.

8. "If men are to live together as civilized beings, then justice, not sacrifice, must be the ruling principle among them....To be just, is to deal with men as they objectively deserve, which means: never to grant or demand the unearned, neither in matter nor in spirit," (Branden, 1965b).

This statement defines a civilized man as one who primarily demands justice rather than good will from others; and it defines justice as giving people only what they (in Rand's and Branden's opinion) earn. But it is just as possible to define a civilized man as one who primarily is kind to others and to define justice as partly granting one's goods and services for no remuneration to those who have little ability or inclination to earn for themselves. The objectivist statement, therefore, is tautological and meaningless. What it really seems to mean is that, "We, Rand and Branden, demand that you focus on your own earning power rather than on being kind to others; and if you don't, we will label you unjust and uncivilized!"

9. "Ayn Rand demonstrates...that rights are neither arbitrary nor 'stipulational' nor provisional, but are logically derivable from man's nature and needs as a living being. 'The source of man's rights is not divine law or congressional law, but the law of identity. A is A-- and Man is Man. Rights are conditions of existence required by man's nature for his proper survival,'" (Branden, 1965b).

a. This statement assumes that people's nature demands that they must go on living--which, I say again, is not true. Their nature patently includes self-destruction as well as self-preservation; and there seems to be an excellent chance that, especially in this atomic age, their nature will nicely help them to destroy themselves.

b. Branden's statement also assumes that because A is A and Man is Man, humans must survive. This is a non-sequitur. One could just as "logically" state that because A is A and Man is Man, humans must die young, or live forever. Even the most indubitable fact doesn't necessitate anything, but merely presents a degree of probability that certain other facts will follow. Thus, the fact that Man is Man doesn't mean that he has to be taxed or has to die; but there is good reason to believe that, in almost any kind of social group, death and taxes are inevitable.

c. Although Rand and Branden certainly may not agree, the sources of people's rights are often arbitrary, stipulational, and provisional. In various periods and places, they decide what their rights are; and in other periods and places, they decide differently. Because of their tautological makeup, there is a strong tendency for them to decide on certain rights (such as a good amount of political freedom) than on other rights (such as the right to kill others at whim). But these tendencies can be, and often are, significantly altered. If Rand wants to decide what people's rights indubitably are, for all time to come, she is free to do so. But the rest of us are also free to differ with her arbitrary and Godlike definitions.

10. "There is only one reality--the reality knowable to reason. And if man does not choose to perceive it, there is nothing else for him

to perceive; if it is not of this world that he is conscious, then he is not conscious at all" (Branden, 1963).

This is another great tautological statement of Randianism. First of all, reality is *defined* as that which is knowable to reason. Then it is *assumed* that people can only perceive reality and nothing else. Then it is *assumed*, again, that they can only be conscious of reality or not be conscious of reality or not be conscious at all. Objections to this view follow:

a. Elsewhere, the objectivists do not define reality as that which is knowable to reason, but keep insisting that "existence exists"--meaning that it has an independent existence, quite apart from people as its knower.

b. Actually, reality or the external world probably has some kind of existence in its own right, as well as perceiving-thinking-emoting-acting-processes. There is, therefore, not merely the reality knowable to reason, but (i) the reality knowable to lower, unreasoning animals and (ii) the reality knowable to people's reason and to their non-reasoning or semi-reasoning processes.

c. If people do not choose to perceive external reality, they can still perceive what they want to perceive--can hallucinate, for example. They would normally do better, or be more efficient, if they perceived reality; but they do not have to perceive it.

d. If people do not choose to be conscious of the external world, they can again choose to be conscious of their own inner world, or of any kind of world they wish to make up in their head. This, by normal standards, may be "pathological;" but they can still do it, and still (though perhaps in a mental hospital) survive.

e. Only by Rand's whim and command do people perceive nothing, and are conscious of nothing, when they do not perceive and become conscious of what she demands.

11. "Capitalism is not merely the 'practical,' but the only moral system in history" (Rand, 1966b).

But why is capitalism moral? Because it includes the free market. And why is the free market moral? Because it is rational. And why is the free market rational? Because--well, because it is. But why is it? Well--to be honest--because Rand says it is. For there is little real evidence that it is.

Actually, the morality of any social system is its practicality: the fact that it works so well that the humans who live under it are able (a) to survive (if they wish to do so), (b) to be reasonably happy while surviving, and (c) to be, as much as they can feasibly be, themselves: to do largely what they like to do, what they enjoy, while not needlessly interfering with the life and enjoyments of others. The fact that Ayn Rand sees morality as something more than practicality, and

as a sort of thing-in-itself, or an ineffable essence, once again shows that she is not really empirical (observational) and scientific (experimental), but that she is partly religiously and mystically tautological.

12. "Those who advocate laissez-faire capitalism are the only advocates of man's rights," (Rand, 1964).

What this actually means--if you look closely at it--is that people's inalienable rights, according to Rand, must be economically free; that laissez-faire capitalism is economic freedom; and that therefore advocates of laissez-faire capitalism are the only advocates of people's rights. But this syllogism merely states three repetitive assumptions, all of which are used to "prove" each other's "truth."

These assumptions are from an empirical standpoint, false. (a) People, seem to have no *inalienable* rights, including that of economic freedom; (b) laissez-faire capitalism is economic freedom for some individuals and economic slavery and inefficiency for many (probably more!) others; and (c) devout advocates of laissez-faire capitalism have many strange bedfellows (including rigid collectivists,) who also advocate people's inalienable rights--and who are just about as irrational as are the objectivists in their advocacies! Thus, where the objectivists insist that extreme laissez-faire capitalism must exist if humanity is to survive, the fanatical communists insist that history

must move inevitably toward a classless, stateless, communist society. Neither of these 'musts' is empirically founded.

13. "Logic is the art of non-contradictory identification. A contradiction cannot exist. An atom is itself, and so is the universe; neither can contradict its own identity; nor can a part contradict the whole. People form no valid concept unless they integrate it, without contradiction, into the total sum of their knowledge. To be contradictory is to confess an error in your thinking; to maintain a contradiction is to abdicate your mind and to evict yourself from the realm of reality" (Rand, 1961b).

There are several objections to this statement and its implications:

a. Logic, as Rand says, is the art of non-contradictory identification--which is itself a tautology. For to identify means, according to the dictionary, " 1.) to make identical; consider or treat as the same; as, identify your interests with ours. 2.) to show to be a certain person or thing; fix the identity of; show to be the same as something or someone assumed, described, or claimed." To identify, then, we label; and we naturally try to label a thing the same way today as we do tomorrow, so that our second label will not contradict our first one. To identify, therefore, is to do the same thing. Logic is a form of consistent or non-contradictory labeling.

But to label something is not the same as the thing we are labeling. A map, as Korzybski and his followers of the school of general semantics say, is not the territory. (1933, 1951). Consequently, Aristotelian logic is merely a system of consistent labeling; it is not descriptive of nor does it say anything about external reality. If I call an object a pencil today and I call it by the same term tomorrow, I am consistent and logical; while if I call it a pencil today and a pen tomorrow, I am inconsistent and illogical. But my being consistent about labeling it doesn't really affect it in any way or truly *make* it what I call it.

Thus, if I call what is ordinarily deemed a "pencil" a "pen" today and keep calling it a "pen" every time I refer to it, I am being quite logical in my own system of labeling it (even though I may disagree with the general system of labeling of my society). Now my logicity in this respect, of course, doesn't turn the "pencil" into a "pen." It still is a piece of wood with lead in it; and it still can't write with ink. By being logical, I merely consistently keep calling a piece of wood with lead in it a "pen." Similarly, if I label what is ordinarily deemed a "pencil" in our culture by its regular name of "pencil," and I keep logically, consistently doing so forever, I do not affect or change this object in any way. It is still what it is--metal or wood with "lead" in it that is useful for writing.

b. When, therefore, Rand goes on to say that "A contradiction cannot exist," she really means that a contradiction in labeling cannot exist. If I label something as a "pencil," I cannot also label it as a "pen"--unless I am pretty crazy. But this does not mean that the pencil must always be what it is. As I have shown previously in this book, the pencil can easily change; or it can have many different forms (e.g., a blue pencil, a red pencil, a long pencil, a short pencil, etc.); or it can be used for other things besides writing.

Rand unfortunately keeps jumping from the label to fact, and unthinkingly confuses the two. Although a logical contradiction, or labeling the same thing differently on two different occasions, leads to illogical results, this is because logic is a definitional process. A "pencil" is a "pencil," in logic, because an object with a piece of lead in it is *defined* as a pencil--and another object with a piece of lead in it is *defined* as another "pencil." Similarly, two and two invariably equal four, because two is defined in a certain manner and four is defined in a definite manner. As long as the definitions of two and four are upheld, two twos have to equal four.

But Rand jumps from this logical system of definitions to the real world when she says that "An atom is itself, and so is the universe; neither can contradict its own identity; nor can a part contradict the whole." This is logically (definitionally) true; but it is by no means

necessarily factually true. For the phrase, "an atom is itself," simply means that what we call an atom we'd better also call an atom the next time we refer to it. The thing in question, the atom itself, may or may not be the same the next time we think about it or employ it; but if it is pretty much the same, then we'd better still call it an atom (rather than, say, a molecule or an automobile!). So even if an atom cannot contradict its own identity--that is, its own label--it can, peculiarly enough, contradict itself: be something other than an atom, or be a special kind of atom, or act differently one day than it acts on another day.

As for the Randian thesis that a part cannot contradict the whole, what this means (if it means anything sensible!) is that once we define certain things, and build a whole out of our definitions, the sum of the things must equal the whole, and the two must continue (by this very defining process) to hang together. Thus, if we define one in a certain manner and say that three ones equals the sum of three, we cannot thereafter make one of the ones into one-half or into one and a half--else we shall no longer get the sum of three. So in logic, a part cannot contradict the whole, by definition.

In real life, however, a part can fairly easily contradict the whole--especially in human affairs. Thus, a part or an aspect of a person may be execrable--he may, for example, frequently resort to

thieving. But in other respects he may be excellent--may be kind to his family, to others; may be open and honest about himself to his associates; may be a very hard worker; and may be exceptionally bright. Consequently, in part he is bad--but on the whole most of us may rate him as being pretty good.

Similarly, in real life contradictions may easily exist. The person we just used as an example is highly self-contradictory: especially if he arbitrarily harms some people by stealing from them and helps others by being unusually nice to them. And your mate may be exceptionally hysterical about fifty per cent of the time and exceedingly calm and efficient the other fifty per cent of the time. So, aside from logic it is foolish to agree with Ayn Rand that "a contradiction cannot exist."

c. It is also false to claim, "No concept man forms is valid unless he integrates it without contradiction into the total sum of his knowledge." This may go for logical structures; but hardly for external reality. I may conceive of myself as "efficient"--because I pass intelligence tests well; do good work at the office; play a great game of handball; and get along with people socially. But I may also conceive of myself as "impotent"--because I fail to maintain an erection very long with my girlfriend; because I speak badly when giving public addresses; and because I am poor at fist fighting. My

two concepts of myself are fairly contradictory; yet I may integrate them both into the total sum of my knowledge of myself.

d. To arrive at a contradiction is to confess an error in one's thinking--if the error is made in the framework of a logical system. Otherwise, if one sees that one thinks one thing here--e.g., "I hate most popular music"--and one thinks a contradictory thing there--e.g., "I love most jazz"--one can merely say to oneself, "Now, isn't that fascinating! How contradictory I seem to be in some respects. Maybe that makes my life more interesting." To acknowledge a contradiction that exists in reality is to think straightly rather than crookedly. When reality is not contradictory and one thinks that it is, one demonstrates an error in one's perception or thinking.

e. To maintain a contradiction is not to abdicate your ability to think or to evict yourself from the realm of reality. You can discover that you hate most popular music and like most jazz and decide to keep behaving in this "contradictory" manner; and you can be sane and correct in making this kind of decision. If you maintain a logical contradiction, then you are indubitably (by definition!) illogical. But that still doesn't mean, as Ayn Rand's catastrophizing implies, that you then entirely abdicate straight thinking. You merely surrender it in a certain area.

Maintaining a logical contradiction, moreover, by no means necessarily indicates you evict yourself from the realm of reality--for logic and reality are not the same realms. Logic may be helpful in your understanding or changing reality but it is a special tool of thinking that is not coextensive with reality.

14. "A unilateral breach of contract involves an indirect use of physical force: it consists in essence, of one man receiving the material values, goods or services of another, then refusing to pay for them and thus keeping them by force (by mere physical possession), not by right."--i.e., keeping them without the consent of their owner, (Rand, 1964).

In this passage the term "owner" is first defined in a special way: to mean the individual who presumably works for and honestly earns material values, goods, or services. This, of course, is not what the term "owner" always means--since people may "own" goods by inheriting them, stealing them, blackmailing another into giving him these goods, enslaving and exploiting another and stealing the goods he or she produces, etc.

Secondly, the term "right" is defined as meaning the propriety of the "owner's" keeping what he has "legitimately" come to own. It could, naturally, mean many other things: such as the "right" of the individual to keep any goods he comes to possess, no matter how he

gets them; the "right" of a person to take away another's goods, even by physical force or murder; or the "right" of people to have goods because the state decrees that they shall have a minimum share of those goods produced in their community.

Once the words "owner" and "right" are defined in the above fanatically religious objectivist manner, and precisely because of these definitions, the rest of Ayn Rand's statement starts to make perfect sense. If "owner" and "right" are defined in some of the other possible ways mentioned in the preceding two paragraphs, her conclusions would not make sense.

The crowning irony of Ayn Rand's view is that if "force" is defined as she defines it here--that is, as keeping material values, goods, or services by mere physical possession--then the entire capitalist system, which she deifies, is based on force. For under capitalism, Jones discovers oil on his land and keeps the oil because he physically possesses the land. Smith inherits money from his father and keeps it because it was first physically possessed by his father and is now physically possessed by him. Robbins buys General Motors stock at 100 and sells it at 200 because, at the time of the sale, she happens to physically possess the stock. Theoretically, Jones, Smith, and Robbins have all "earned" the material values, goods, or services on which they make their profits. Actually, of course, much of their

“earning” is by dint of their mere physical possession of these things. A main consistent way that one can “earn” money and things is to work for them; but capitalism and the profit system are not based on evaluating everything by work.

On the other hand, Karl Marx’s system of tracing down the value of all produced to “labor power,” uses this kind of arbitrary measuring rod. Capitalism is mainly based on the individual’s investment of capital; and one of the most important reasons he has capital to invest is that he physically possesses money, notes, stocks, bonds, etc.

Peculiarly, therefore, Ayn Rand is horrified by a unilateral breach of contract on the grounds that it is an indirect use of physical force; but she is ecstatic about the more direct uses of physical force--keeping goods by mere physical possession--which are at the very heart of the capitalist system. In this instance, her clever tautological reasoning is not so clever!

15. “The source of property rights is the law of causality. All property and all forms of wealth are produced by man’s mind and labor,” (Rand, 1957).

This is one of the most typical non-sequiturs Rand and her followers employ. Assuming that an absolute law of causality exists--that if y exists, it always has some cause, which we can call x (which, of course, could never be absolutely proved, since who is to say that

some day an existent y will not turn up without any cause, x?)--this principle of causality would still have nothing intrinsically to do with human rights. Thus, the fact that the physical processes that are going on in the sun and cause sunshine does not give me the right to sit in the sunshine all day and bask.

Sunshine might emanate from the sun forever; and I might (a) be dead; (b) be confined to my house all the time by an illness; (c) live in a region where there was practically no sunshine all year; (d) have an allergic reaction to sunshine that prevents my sitting in the sun and (e) have to work all day indoors. My "right" to sit in the sun is therefore only very indirectly related to the cause of sunshine. Naturally, the laws of causality have some effect on the factors it is related to. But since they have an effect on practically everything, it is rather silly to say that my right to sit in the sun is particularly related to and stems from these laws of causality.

Rand's statement would make just as much sense if it were slightly changed into this form: "The source of the right of the state to own property is the law of causality. All property and all forms of wealth might be produced by the mind and labor of men who live in states." This is still, however, a non-sequitur. Just because all property and all forms of wealth are produced (caused by) the mind and labor of men who live in states does not give the state the right to

own all property. The right of the individual or the state to own property stems from the value system that people and the state agree upon; and this value system may only be very obliquely related to the fact that people produce property or that they live in states when they produce it.

Suppose that a thousand years from now people no longer do any kind of productive work but merely exist for various kinds of pleasure and consumption. Either machines do all the work; or some slave population on, say, Mars produces everything. Under this system, all property and all forms of wealth would still have to be somehow produced or caused, for the present "laws of causality" would presumably still exist. But no matter who caused the property to be produced at that time, the right to own it could be given to (a) individuals, (b) the state, or (c) any other conceivable entity that people then agreed to give it to.

Only definitionally, then, are the source of property and the source of property rights related. The fact that goods are produced does not necessarily give anyone the right to own them, any more than the fact that carbon dioxide, produced by human breathing, gives anyone the right to own it. Human rights, I keep repeating, do not lie in the intrinsic nature of things; they are agreed upon among humans.

16. "The noblest act you have ever performed is the act of your mind in the process of grasping that two and two make four," (Rand, 1961b).

Here Rand falsely notes that two and two make four: and that you are noble for grasping this "fact." She fails to note that two and two, definitionally make four; and that her own mind, apparently, isn't sufficiently noble to acknowledge this definition. Her love for mathematics --which her biographer, Barbara Branden tell us has been a ruling passion of her life since childhood--seems to lead her to deify logical processes and to connect them illegitimately with external reality. (1995).

Rand and her followers vehemently deny the time-honored distinction that philosophers make between analytic (logical) and synthetic (empirical) propositions. Thus, the leading objectivist philosopher, Leonard Peikoff states that "there is no distinction between the 'logically' and the 'empirically' possible (or impossible). All truths...are the product of a logical identification of the facts of experience. This applies as much to the identification of possibilities as of actualities." (1967).

Furthermore, Peikoff states, definitional and tautological propositions are really empirical. "Definitions represent condensations of a wealth of observations, i.e., a wealth of 'empirical' knowledge;

definitions can be arrived at and validated only on the basis of experience." We cannot, therefore, contrast propositions that are true "by definition" and propositions that are true "by experience." If we derive an "empirical" truth from, and validated by reference to, perceptual observations, then all truths are "empirical" since truth is the identification of a fact of reality. A "non-empirical truth" would be an identification of a fact of reality, which we validate independently of observation of reality. This would imply a mystical theory of innate ideas.

Peikoff continues: "Knowledge cannot be acquired by experience apart from logic, nor by logic apart from experience." (1967). Without the use of logic, we have no method of drawing conclusions from our perceptual data. We are confined to range-of-the-moment observations and any perceptual fantasy that occurs to us is a future possibility that can invalidate our "empirical" propositions. Without reference to the facts of experience, we have no basis for our "logical" propositions, which become mere arbitrary products of our own invention. Divorced from logic, our arbitrary exercise of our human imagination systematically undercuts the "empirical"; divorced from the facts of experience, our same imagination arbitrarily creates the "logical." Can anyone "project" a more thorough way of invalidating all of human knowledge?

At first blush, it sounds as if Peikoff, speaking for objectivist philosophy, is saying some very wise things. On closer examination, the following serious flaws in his thinking may be observed:

a. If all truths are the product of a logical identification of the facts of experience, then we shall have to conclude that certain universally accepted mathematical and logical "truths" are not really true. Consider, for example, the mathematical "truth" that two and two must always equal four and the logical "truth" that A cannot, at one and the same time, be A and not-A. If the number one is defined in a thoroughly consistent and arbitrary manner as the number expressing unity or designating a single unit, the first used in counting a series, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., then one and one have to equal two and two and two have to equal four. Again, if A is defined as a particular thing and not-A is defined as anything that is different and separate from A, then A cannot be A and not-A.

The logical propositions, then, that two and two have to equal four and that A cannot be A and not-A at the same time definitely appear to be truths. Ayn Rand points out that they are truths--as in her statement, "The noblest act you have ever performed is the act of your mind in the process of grasping that two and two make four." How, then, can Peikoff, who regularly gave a course at the Nathaniel Branden Institute, entitled "Objectivism's Theory of Knowledge," claim

that logical truths, which seem to have nothing to do with identifying the facts of experience, but are quite definitional, are not true?

b. Peikoff contends we can only define one as a single unit and A as not-A because the facts of experience demonstrate that these definitions are true. "Definitions," he states, "represent condensations of a wealth of observations, i.e., a wealth of 'empirical' knowledge; definitions can be arrived at and validated only on the basis of experience." (1967). How (except by definition) can he prove this? First of all, he talks about definitions being "validated"--when, normally, they are axiomatically given and are not necessarily validated. Secondly, assuming that definitions can be validated, how is it possible to show that they can only be proved valid on the basis of experience? If this were so, axioms would not really be axioms, but would be general propositions that are inducted from many observations of external reality. Since reality is subject to continual change, nothing only, always, or must exist, then all mathematical and logical laws would not be provable.

c. If Peikoff is correct, and "All truths...are the product of a logical identification of the facts of experience," it would appear that possibility would reign supreme in human affairs, and that virtually nothing could be posited absolutely (that is, with certainty) or exclusively. But Ayn Rand and her fanatical followers, as we have

seen consistently throughout this book, are violently opposed to probabilistic thinking, and continually make extreme-dominated statements about the way things are, and should be. They also claim that what is, ought to be--which is not exactly a probabilistic statement! How, then, can they hope to base truth entirely on experience, which is inevitably probabilistic and changing, and still demand absolute certainty, which is highly non-probabilistic?

Peikoff himself includes this objectivist contradiction in the following statement: "If the denial of a proposition is inconceivable, if there is no possibility that any fact of reality can contradict it, i.e., if the proposition represents knowledge which is certain, then it does not represent knowledge of reality." (1967). So, if a proposition cannot be wrong, it cannot be right. A proposition is factual only when it asserts facts that are still unknown, i.e., only when it represents a hypothesis. If a hypothesis is proven and becomes a certainty, it ceases to refer to facts, and ceases to represent knowledge of reality. When a proposition is conclusively demonstrated--so that to deny it is obviously to endorse a logical contradiction--the proposition is written off as a product of human convention or arbitrary whim. This means: a proposition is seen as arbitrary precisely because it has been logically proven.

Of course, Peikoff is being sarcastic about the usual philosophic position of the Kantians and the logical positivists, and is setting up a straw man that presumably represents their position and then brutally knocking it down. Actually, these philosophers do not generally say that knowledge of reality must be uncertain; they merely point out that it almost always is. Nor do they say that if a hypothesis is proven and becomes a certainty, it ceases to refer to facts and ceases to represent knowledge of reality. They simply show that it is highly unlikely that any hypothesis about reality will be completely proven under all circumstances and for all time to come; and they indicate that, when hypotheses are indisputable "proven," they invariably turn out to be axioms, tautologies, or analytic propositions that are divorced from empirical observation. Because, these philosophers state, reality appears to be exceptionally pluralistic, changing, and transactionally related to humans, it is highly improbable that hypotheses about it will be valid when they are stated in monolithic, unchanging, one-sided terms. But this hardly shows that the more absolutistic and certain a hypothesis is the more it must be arbitrary.

Peikoff indicates, he strongly believes that some empirically backed propositions are certain. In this respect, he seems to be contradictory. On the one hand, he insists that "definitions can be arrived at and validated only on the basis of experience," and, on the

other hand, he accuses the non-objectivist philosophers of stating that "if a proposition is conclusively demonstrated--so that to deny it is obviously to endorse a logical contradiction--then, in virtue of this fact, the proposition is written off as a product of human convention or arbitrary whim." It seems clear here that Peikoff believes that a proposition will only be conclusively demonstrated when, to deny it is obviously to endorse a logical contradiction; and that therefore, no proposition will ever be conclusively demonstrated by empirical observation alone.

If this is so, then we find Peikoff in the uncomfortable position of stating (a) that logical, definitional, or axiomatic propositions are always based on experience; (b) that empirical or experiential propositions, by themselves, can never be conclusively demonstrated; but that (c) logical propositions that include experience-based observations can be conclusively or absolutely demonstrated. If he would really be consistent, his statement that "knowledge cannot be acquired by experience apart from logic, nor by logic apart from experience" would lead him to the conclusion that there are really no certain, completely demonstrated hypotheses--which is pretty much what the logical positivists, whom he so severely condemns, say! But he somehow manages to keep the facts of experience (which just about all scientists today agree are based on laws of probability)

intrinsically bound with the "facts" or "truths" of logic, (which he and everyone else seem to agree can lead to conclusively demonstrated, non-probabilistic laws,) and not see that he is immersed in a serious contradiction, (which by his own philosophic standards is intolerable!). After throwing Immanuel Kant and the logical positivists out of the front door, he has surreptitiously dragged them in through the back door.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Peikoff makes a telling point that may well be true--a point made by logical empiricists as well: that in the final analysis, truth cannot be divorced from empirical observation. But because his conclusion would then lead to the further conclusion that logic itself has experiential elements in it, and therefore, no hypothesis can be certainly proven for all time, he finally repudiates his own view and insists that propositions can be conclusively demonstrated by setting them up in such a manner that they cannot be logically contradicted. As a fanatical objectivist and religionist, he obviously cannot stand the idea that there really be no absolutes or certainties in the world; so, like other objectivist writers, he is forced to fall back on what Kant called analytic or logical propositions--that is, on hypotheses based purely on logic--to sustain the notion that certainties must exist.

This is what Rand and objectivists consistently do. They claim that "truth is the identification of a fact of reality" but (a) they studiously ignore the thousands of facts which do not sustain their theories, (as I show in detail in chapter 11); and (b) they uphold the basic tenets and "certainties" of their system of philosophy and ethics by resorting to analytic, definitional, tautological propositions that are divorced from empirical evidence.

It is interesting to note again that Ayn Rand is vitriolic in her attack on the logical positivists: "The nominalists of modern philosophy, particularly the logical positivists and linguistic analysts, claim that the alternative of true or false is not applicable to definitions, only to 'factual' propositions." (1967a). Since, she says, they claim that words represent arbitrary (social) conventions, and since concepts have no objective reality, a definition can be neither true nor false. Therefore, the logical positivists' assault on reason has never reached a deeper level or a lower depth. Yet Peikoff, Rand's devoted follower, also seems to be saying that the alternative of true or false is not applicable to pure definitions, only to "factual" propositions when he states that "knowledge cannot be acquired...by logic apart from experience." So, as noted above, he is not far removed from the logical positivists.

But Rand seems to have the final word: "The truth or falsehood of all of man's conclusions, inferences, thought and knowledge rests on the truth or falsehood of his definitions." (1967a). Among the many contradictions reiterated by the objectivists, this statement seems to be the one they really believe and strongly feel: that truth basically is a matter of definition; that definitions, at most, are only partly drawn from reality; and therefore, there can be a certain, once-for-all-time, true truth--and religious objectivism is its name.

It is this ultimate faith in the power of analytic, definitional propositions that nullifies practically all the good things that are included in fanatically religious objectivism. Most people are attracted to Ayn Rand and her group because she stoutly (if somewhat melodramatically) presents a case for individualism, egoism, atheism, and laissez-faire capitalism. In these respects, she makes some telling points that shake up a good many conventional people and that help some of them to challenge their basic assumptions and to think more clearly about themselves and the world. This is particularly true of many young people, who are inspired by her writings to think for the first time about many propositions that they have hitherto unthinkingly upheld.

In regard to her espousal of individualism, egoism, atheism, and laissez-faire capitalism, Rand makes some excellent empirical points

and marshals observational evidence to challenge anti-individualistic and collectivist theories. Unfortunately, she ignores most of the evidence to the contrary, and which would lead to a serious modification of her own theories; and because she lacks conclusive evidence for many of her extreme views, she incessantly resorts to definitional, tautological, devoutly religious propositions as "proof" of these views. She thereby invalidates (or at least fails to substantiate) many of her partially sound ideas on individualism and egoism; she winds up as a believer in a totally unrealistic form of capitalism; and, ironically, she changes from atheist to true dogmatic and fanatic believer. Many or most of her initial followers leave her camp disillusioned, often believing their own modified (and more sensible) versions of individualism and egoism; and those who enthusiastically stay usually wind up adopting her as a metaphysically religious prophetess. From hard realism, they dive into tautological thinking and mysticism, thereby, alas, following their absolutistic religious leader into an irrational morass.

Chapter 9

Ayn Rand's Intolerance of Opposing Philosophies

Fanatical religionists, because they believe due to blind faith rather than empirical evidence, frequently are highly intolerant of those who have opposing views. Consequently, they steadily resort to arguments ad-hominem: that is, they appeal to people's prejudices rather than to their reason, and they attack their opponents in a personal manner instead of dealing with the subject they disagree with. The argument ad-hominem is a favorite resort of objectivist writers, as I shall show by citing some examples below.

In addition to using personal invective against their opponents, Rand and her followers frequently resort to accusing them of many views to which they clearly do not subscribe. Then these objectivist writers enthusiastically proceed to knock down the strawmen they have constructed--while deluding themselves that they have actually demolished their opponents' views. This, again, is a typical strategy of religionists: who ascribe devilish positions to their less religious adversaries and then gleefully "destroy" these supposed positions. Here, culled from Randian files, are some examples:

1. "The businessman has raised men's standard of living--but the intellectual has dropped men's standard of thought to the level of an impotent savage," (Rand, 1964).

First of all, this comparison is irrelevant, since it implies that businesspeople, because they have raised our standard of living, have also raised our intellectual standard. Something of the reverse may be true; as the intellectual level of businesspeople is often low and the intellectual products that they normally purvey to the public--such as Hollywood films, TV programs, paperback novels, and popular music--are hardly highly cultural.

Secondly, it should be obvious to any objective--though not to any objectivist--observer that the modern intellectual does not quite think on the same low level as that of an impotent savage.

2. "It is only the Atillaist, pragmatist, positivist, anti-conceptual mentality--which grants no validity to abstractions, no meaning to principles and no power to ideas--that can still wonder why a theoretical doctrine of that kind has to lead in practice to the torrent of blood and brute, non-human horror of such socialist societies as Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia." (Rand,1961b). Let me answer:

a. It is nasty and obfuscating to refer to one's intellectual opponents, as Rand does, as "Witch Doctors and Attilaists." This is hardly scientific or philosophic terminology!

b. It is unfair to lump virtually all one's opponents into two extreme categories. Granted that some collectivists may be witch doctors or mystics and that some may be Attilaists or advocates of

violence, it is unlikely that all, or even the great majority of, Ayn Rand's adversaries are in any of these categories. I certainly don't consider myself a witch doctor (quite the contrary!) nor an Attilaist; yet presumably I shall be so labeled by Rand and her devoutly religious objectivists.

c. It is false to label such thinkers as pragmatists and positivists as Attilaists when most of them--such as William James and A.J. Ayer--were solidly against war and violence.

d. It is inaccurate and unfair to claim that pragmatists and positivists grant "no validity to abstractions, no meaning to principles and no power to ideas." They do question the absolutistic "validity" that some other philosophers give to abstractions, principles, and ideas, but they constantly use abstractions and obviously believe that on some level these can be legitimately made.

e. It is ridiculous to allege that certain philosophies, such as those of pragmatism and positivism, led to all the evils in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia in the twentieth century and of fanatical terrorism in the twenty-first century. Many complicated factors were patently involved in creating these evils. Some of the stoutest Nazis, Stalinists, and terrorists were also pragmatists and positivists; and most of the avowed Nazis, Stalinists, and terrorists, to my way of thinking, were absolutists, whose basic philosophy of the world and

the people in it did not radically differ from that of Rand and the objectivists.

3. In reviewing some of the elements in Pauline Reagé's critically acclaimed novel, *The Story of O*, Ayn Rand states that 'if one turns from that muck to the visual arts, one finds the same sewer in somewhat different forms. To the extent that they communicate anything at all, the visual arts are ruled by a single principle: distortion.'" (1966a).

Now, one can well understand that Rand does not approve of the theme or the style of *The Story of O*; but that hardly justifies her designating Mlle. Reagé's work as complete "muck." This is a globally pejorative statement and implies that Reagé's novel has no redeeming value. Virtually none of the other literary critics, many of whom deplored certain aspects of the work, dealt with it in this thoroughly condemning manner.

One can also grant Rand the right to disagree with the deliberate distortions of today's visual arts. But that does not mean that all modern artists are truly wallowing in a "sewer." Rand indicates that all the visual arts today are ruled by a single principle: distortion. Considering the popularity of many modern representational artists--such as Moses and Raphael Soyer--this is surely an extreme over-generalization.

4. When the thugs of Europe's People's States snarl that you are guilty of intolerance, and you don't treat your desire to live and their desire to kill you as a difference of opinion--"you cringe and hasten to assure them that you are not intolerant of any horror. When some barefoot bum in some pesthole of Asia yells at you: How dare you be rich--you apologize and beg him to be patient and promise you'll give it all away," (Rand, 1957).

It seems to me that to call the heads of Europe's People's States thugs and to call poverty-stricken Asians barefoot bums is hardly expressing a mere difference of opinion. This sounds much more like the grandiose condemnation of others for having a different opinion; and this kind of grandiosity is exactly what Ayn Rand accuses the heads of Europe's People's States of having!

5. Although Ayn Rand has written against the argument *ad hominem*, and particularly against the form of it that she calls the argument from intimidation, she and her followers use it consistently. As D.J. Hamblin observes in an article on "The Cult of Angry Ayn Rand" in Life Magazine, "There is, of course, a plethora of villains in the world. In addition to Atilla and the witch doctor, there are Hitler, Khrushchev, the 'looters and moochers' who levy taxes and live off welfare, the 'myth-makers' who push religion at unsuspecting small children, the 'obscene liberals' who write on public affairs and who

apparently control every newspaper and publishing house in the U.S., with the exception of the [Nathaniel Branden] Institute's own." (1964).

This kind of ad-hominem condemnation of their opponents should be apparent to all objective observers of objectivism; and it again shows their unscientific and religious-minded orientation.

6. John Kobler, in an article in the Saturday Evening Post on "The Curious Cult of Ayn Rand," reports that when Ayn Rand was to speak at Syracuse University and the Syracuse newspaper, The Daily Orange, published an article saying, "She has been accused of being a Nazi sympathizer, because of her neo-Nietzscheian philosophy of extreme individualism," she agreed to give her scheduled talk that evening only after the paper had apologized. The Associated Press quoted her as saying: "What they said about me was inspired either by Communists or namby-pamby compromisers."

Here we have not only the usual ad-hominem argument of the objectivists, but also unusual vulnerable to insult. Theoretically, objectivists have self-esteem because of their own value system, are not particularly concerned with what others think of them, and are courageous nonconformists. Not, apparently, in this instance!

7. Joseph Collins points out that Ayn Rand continually uses old wives' tales in her writings; and he cites her statement that the

man who “closed the front door of philosophy to reason was Immanuel Kant.”

Says Collins: “I do not think that it is pedantry to protest against the picture given here of Kant as a thinker who regarded our concepts of the phenomenal world as a collective delusion, who said that desire and benefit destroy the morality of an act, and who is given the epithet ‘head-shrinker’ as a description of his influence. When a person claims to be writing philosophy and to be giving evaluations of philosophers, we have the right to demand that she avoid such old wives’ tales.”

8. Nathaniel Branden: “Altruism does not declare: Help others when no self-sacrifice is entailed--or: Help those in whom you see positive value. Altruism declares: Help others, any others, because such is your only moral function.” (1962). Otherwise you are nothing--and cannot pass judgment on the worthiness of those who demand your help. They have the right; you have the duty.

Here it is alleged that all individuals who uphold an altruistic philosophy insist that (a) it is your only moral function to help others; that (b) you are nothing if you do not sacrifice yourself to others; and that (c) all individuals who think that they need your help have the absolute right to receive it. This, of course, is a blatant caricature of what the typical altruist believes. Maybe there is, somewhere in this

wide world, a believer in altruism who subscribes to the extreme doctrines that Branden holds are the core of this philosophy. But I have never yet encountered one and doubt that I ever shall.

9. "Still another kind of soul is revealed by the man who takes pleasure, not in achievement, but in destruction, whose action is aimed, not at attaining efficacy, but at ruling those who have attained it: the soul of a man abjectly lacking in self-value." (Branden, 1964). He is so overwhelmed by his terror of existence that his single form of self-fulfillment is to unleash his resentment and hatred against those who do not share his state, including those who are able to live. He destroys the confident, the strong and the healthy. Instead, he could convert impotence into efficacy.

I would guess, again, that such a man somewhere exists; but he is probably psychotic, and he appears to be exceptionally rare. That the objectivists should set up this straw-man figure as one of their usual opponents is indeed sad.

10. "Today, however, when people speak of 'compromise,' what they mean is not a legitimate mutual concession or a trade, but precisely the betrayal of one's principles--the unilateral surrender to any groundless, irrational claim." (Rand, 1964). They swear by ethical subjectivism, which holds that a desire or a whim is an irreducible moral primary. It holds that all people are entitled to any desire they

might feel like asserting, that all desires have equal moral validity, and that the only way people can get along together is by giving in to anything and 'compromising' with anyone. Who will profit and who would lose by such a doctrine? (Rand, 1962).

First of all, practically everyone who speaks of compromise today means a mutual concession or a trade and not a betrayal of one's fundamental principles.

Secondly, the kind of ethical subjectivism Rand is talking about here is largely mythological, since virtually no one seems to hold that all desires have equal moral validity. Who, for example, claims that your desire to kill me, or any other action you might take is exactly as immoral as your desire to have sex relations with me, or to have me support you?

Third, no ethical subjectivist that I know thinks that the only way people can get along together is by giving in to anything and compromising with anyone. An ethical subjectivist might understand A's desire to blackmail B and thereby to get money, a job, or something else from B; and he might think that A was hardly an inordinate louse for having this desire. But he would not counsel B to give in to A's--or anyone else's--blackmail and might well not counsel B even to attempt to compromise with A.

11. As stated explicitly by many intellectuals, says Rand, the injunction don't be certain "is the suggestion that if nobody holds any firm convictions, if everybody is willing to give in to everybody else, no dictator will rise among us and we will escape the destruction sweeping the rest of the world." (1964).

What false conclusions and unjust aspersions! For one thing, to say that nobody is certain--that is, nobody is absolutely sure--of anything does not mean that nobody holds any firm convictions and everybody is willing to give in to everybody else. A firm conviction--or strong belief--can easily be based on a high degree of probability rather than on certainty.

Thus, I am convinced that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is the most efficient form of therapy yet developed because I think that there is a high degree of probability (based on my clinical experiences and on experimental evidence) that it is. But if the facts later show that some other system of psychotherapy is more effective, I shall change my firm conviction.

Also, I am firmly convinced that nothing is absolutely certain in the world, because there is a high degree of probability that absolutes do not exist. But I am not willing to give in to the objectivists!--and say that, because they are certain of their views, they must be right, or I must completely compromise with them.

Nor do I think, because of my lack certainty that the United States government should always give in to all other governments. I believe, as do all the nonbelievers in certainty with whom I am acquainted, that dictatorship may rise among us if almost everybody is willing to give in to everybody else; and I believe that the rise of dictatorships should be stoutly fought.

As ever, then, Rand is setting up a straw-man when she accuses me and other non-absolutists of holding hard convictions and espousing total compromise. Maybe that is what she would like to believe we believe; but, of course, we don't.

12. "Sweep aside those parasites of subsidized classrooms, who live on the profits of the mind of others and proclaim that man needs no morality, no values, and no code of behavior." (Rand, 1957). They pose as scientists and claim that people are only animals, do not grant them inclusion in the law of existence they have granted to the lowest of insects.

I know of no scientists--in fact, no humans--who proclaim that people can live happily without any morality, any values, and any code of behavior. And I certainly know of no scientists who do not admit that humans are a special kind of animal, with a capacity to think far greater than that of the lower animals, and who do not agree that the same laws of existence which hold for insects also hold for man. If

Rand can produce such a scientist who is not confined in a mental hospital, I would be interested in meeting her or him.

13. Says John Galt of the mystic: "No matter whose welfare he professes to serve, be it the welfare of God or of that disembodied gargoyle he describes as 'The People,' no matter what ideal he proclaims in terms of some super-natural dimension," a mystic really has the ideal of death, craves to kill and only craves to torture others. (Rand, 1957).

As much as I dislike mysticism (including that of Ayn Rand and fanatically religious objectivists), I would hardly hold their ideal is death, that they have a real craving to kill, and that their only satisfaction is to torture. Most mystics, even if we include among them social democrats who serve 'The People' (and who are not very mystical in the usual sense of that term), have far less desire to kill and torture others than do many hardheaded businessmen and conservatives, whom the objectivists would certainly call non-mystics.

Chapter 10

Ayn Rand's Deification and Hero-Worship

Practically all religions are a form of hero-worship. Humans have great trouble fully accepting reality and that real people are invariably fallible. Because they wish, instead, to live in a world of fantasy, they invent god-like heroes and hero-like gods; and by identifying with and being loved by them, they hope that they will sit on their right hand in heaven. They feel noble rather than mean, confident rather than depressed--which is common among fanatical religionists. Psychologically, we could guess that many fanatic religionists have underlying deep-seated feelings of inferiority, which they compensate for by hero-worshipping God or other humans.

Like most religious-minded groups, the objectivists have this hero-making and God-making tendency--because they, too, seem unable to be happy with unadorned reality but must incessantly deodorize and perfume it. Here are some examples of their deification. "Ayn Rand is not the first writer to project a hero who is a genius; nor is she the first writer to project a hero who fights courageously to achieve his goals. But she *is* the first to project a hero who is a hero *all of the time*--that is, a hero who does not go out to fight a great battle and then come home to marry a hausfrau and to

live his *private* life by a less demanding code of values," (Branden, 1965b).

Branden is exactly right in this passage. Ayn Rand's heroes in her novels--such as Howard Roark and John Galt--are utterly impossible humans--or, rather, super-humans. They have no flaws, and they are literally out of this world. It would be as easy for one of us mere mortals to maintain a friendly relationship with an Ayn Rand hero as it would be for us to befriend such other god-like figures as Jehovah or Jesus Christ.

It is even questionable whether it can be correctly claimed that Roark, Galt, and the other Randian heroes and heroines are ideal figures, who obviously do not exist today, but who might come alive tomorrow. *Could* they? I doubt it: they are just not human. Moreover, if they did exist, it would perhaps be unfortunate; for some of their "ideal" characteristics consist of ruthlessness, intransigent stubbornness, childish grandiosity, abysmal intolerance, and dogmatism. *These*, according to Rand and devout objectivists, are the traits that we ordinary humans are supposed to worship!

Even more amazingly, the objectivists themselves do not seem to acknowledge in any way that Ayn Rand's heroes *are* unrealistically drawn; and Nathaniel Branden even tries to make out a case for their being unusually realistic. This, believe it or not, is Branden's opinion:

"It is significant that the attributes most sharply emphasized in Galt's portrait are intransigent rationality, implacable realism, untouchable serenity, inviolate self-esteem. 'Galt'--to quote a friend of Ayn Rand--'is the man whom reality fits like a glove.'" (1965b). When we consider that the theme of *Atlas Shrugged* is the role of reason in people's existence, we can see why Ayn Rand chose to feature *realism* as Galt's dominant psychological trait. Well, that's interesting to know. I never would have guessed it from the novel itself.

2. "I decided to become a writer, states Rand--not in order to save the world, nor to serve my fellow men--but for the simple, personal, selfish, egotistical happiness of creating the kind of men and events I could like, respect and admire. She says that she can bear to look around levelly but she cannot bear to look down. 'I wanted to look up.'" (B. Branden, 1965).

I would tend to put this a little more strongly and to surmise that Rand could not bear to accept human beings around her because they were, in Nietzsche's famous phrase, "human, and all too human." She therefore felt compelled to dream up fictional characters who alone, she could not out rightly despise.

My summation is borne out by the testimony of her biographer, Barbara Branden who notes of the adolescent Ayn Rand: "While her classmates began to whisper excitedly of dates, she wondered how

they could be interested in 'just boys,' and decided that *she* would care only for a hero." (1965). I could easily make some additional psychological guesses here, and wonder whether young Rand had so little confidence in herself that she felt she really couldn't attract ordinary boys; so she defensively dreamed up heroes who would presumably care for her. This, of course, is sheer speculation. It would be interesting if valid (since it would tend to prove what has often been found psychologically: that people who need gods and heroes tend to feel weak themselves), but it may not necessarily be true.

What does seem to be true is that Rand's adolescent feeling that she could not be interested in "just boys," and could only care for a hero is the basic attitude of true-blue objectivists. They cannot be interested, apparently, in just people, but can only care for an impossible hero or heroine. They make Ayn Rand into quite a heroine and tend to worship her fictional hero, John Galt, as if he truly existed.

3. That hero worship of Rand is conspicuous among the followers of objectivism is shown by Nathaniel Branden's attitude toward her. John Kobler tells us that, by the age of nineteen, Branden had read *The Fountainhead* forty times. (1961). And in writing of *Atlas Shrugged*, Branden himself tells us that this novel "is nearly seven

hundred thousand words long--and there is not one superfluous paragraph and not one extraneous word." (1965b).

What, not *one*? Many dispassionate readers of the book have gained the opposite impression.

Branden, noting this, shudders at the thought of those *Atlas Shrugged* readers who find the book too long and repetitious. Such a reader, he thunders, "imagines--because he perceives things only in the most crudely primitive and generalized manner--that he has understood the book instantly; in fact, he has not understood it at all." (1965b).

This is the same kind of hero-worshipping apology that a devotee of Rabelais might resort to when that author is accused of being verbose and repetitious. "Oh," the apologist could say, "but that was Rabelais' intent: to overwhelm the reader with verbosity." Perhaps, so; but too much of a good thing may be more than enough.

Practically no reputable literary critic has praised Ayn Rand as a fine novelist, though many have given her due credit as an excellent propagandist. One reviewer of *Atlas Shrugged* called it the worst novel that has appeared since *The Fountainhead*. As literature, her novels are usually judged to be second-rate by regular book reviewers.

But this does not stop the hero-worshipping Branden from stating: "in *Atlas Shrugged* Ayn Rand has created more than a great

novel. By any rational, objective literary standard--from the standpoint of plot-structure, suspense, drama, imaginativeness, characterization, evocative and communicative use of language, originality, scope of theme and subject, psychological profundity and philosophical richness--*Atlas Shrugged* is the climax of the novel form, carrying that form to unprecedented heights of intellectual and artistic power."

This is akin to a liberal's saying, today, that *Abie's Irish Rose* was a great play. Ayn Rand may possibly be an outstanding thinker and propagandist; but to see her as a great novelist is a bit too much!

4. Not only does Ayn Rand dream up super-heroes in her books, she also depicts the basest villains. Her heroes are veritable gods--and her villains are true devils. As Patricia Donegan noted in a review of *Atlas Shrugged*: "The characters in this book are of two kinds. They are either good or they are bad. The good ones, and in Ms. Rand's terminology, 'good' is synonymous with 'able,' are all beautiful, clear-eyed, and intelligent, singularly endowed physically as well as mentally. The bad ones are characterized by flabby jowls, bloodshot eyes, and other unpleasant physical characteristics. The bad ones are not able."

5. Rand: "Greatness is achieved by the productive effort of a man's mind in the pursuit of clearly defined, rational goals." (1964).

Notice, in this quotation, Rand does not merely point out that if you steadily engage in productive effort and pursue clearly defined rational goals, you will probably be saner and happier than if you behave less productively and rationally. Oh, no! She insists that this kind of behavior--which presumably would be the rule rather than the exception in any objectivist-dominated society--leads to *greatness*. In and between the lines of most objectivist writings is this same theme: that the object of the human is not merely to live and to be healthy and happy; nor is it even for people to be unusually intelligent and productive. It is, rather, for them to strive mightily for *greatness, nobility, magnificence, pre-eminence, heroism*.

Ayn Rand's goal seems to be to build a society where *all* people are great--and where those who do not achieve this stature are clearly seen as bums, moochers, and nincompoops. Anything less than super-excellence, in her eyes, is louse-hood. What place there will be for the *common* man in her objectivist utopia is a fascinating question.

6. Barbara Branden writes that during the 1950's "Ayn Rand discovered the writer who became her favorite contemporary novelist, from the aspects of originality, imagination, sense of drama and, above all, plot-structure: Mickey Spillane. She disagrees with some of his ideas, but she admires him for the fact that--contrary to the literati's' superficial assertions--Mickey Spillane writes like a *moral*

crusader: he approaches conflicts in the uncompromising terms of 'black-and-white,' his hero, Mike Hammer, is not an exhausted cynic but a moral avenger; Spillane's style never projects the fashionable, evasive 'it seems to me,' but the firmly committed 'it is.'" (1965).

It is true that Mickey Spillane wrote like a *moral crusader*; and it is perhaps significant that he became a member of Jehovah's Witnesses--one of the most "moral," most fanatically religious groups in the world. Where Jehovah's Witnesses are dogmatically devoted to the letter of the Old Testament, the objectivists appear to be similarly devoted to the letter of the new New Testament--*Atlas Shrugged*.

Mike Hammer is a moral avenger; and so, as I shall make even clearer by the end of my material on fanatical religiosity, is Ayn Rand. Moral avengers, like most true believers, create gods and devils, and believe religiously in the Absolute Truth of the moralistic creeds they are avenging. They rarely say, "it seems to me," but invariably insist "it is." It is most appropriate, therefore, that Rand should pick as her favorite novelist and her favorite hero Mickey Spillane and his creation, Mike Hammer, for she falls right in with their dogmatizing, moralizing, deifying portrayals.

7. Ayn Rand and her great hero, John Galt, in *Atlas Shrugged*, castigate the self-sacrificers and the leeches of the world. She writes, "That is the whole of their shabby secret. The secret of all

their esoteric philosophies, of their evasive eyes and snarling words, the secret for which they destroy civilization, language, industries and lives, the purpose for which they dissolve the absolutes of reason, logic, matter, existence, reality--is to build a single holy absolute: their *Wish.*" (1957).

One would think, from this diatribe, that wishing, desiring, or wanting was a horrible crime! Actually there is nothing wrong with wishing, as long as wishers do not believe that they *have* to have what they want. (Ellis, 1962, 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Ellis & Harper, 1997). As Rand points out, making a wish into a holy absolute is pretty neurotic or psychotic. What she fails to note is that her own wish *is to deify reason*. She does not contend that reason is *good*, or that reasoning is a *better* path than irrationality. No, she insists on making reason into a single holy absolute. She is therefore just as much an over-generalizer as those who deify wishing. The pot, apparently, is calling the kettle black.

8. Much of the objectivists' appeal to their followers, and to their young followers in particular, stems from their invention of heroes. As D.J. Hamblin notes in her *Life* Magazine article on "The Cult of Angry Ayn Rand": "There aren't enough heroes in the world,' says a Wall Street broker. 'Ayn Rand creates heroes--and heroes who win. It is exciting, exhilarating.' Behind all the explanations lies the

idealistic romanticism of youth. The students of objectivism are romantics: 'When I think back to those in my class at N.B.I. [Nathaniel Branden Institute], I see them as tall, confident, clear-eyed...', says the retail store clerk dreamily. That's the way Ayn Rand herself, at 62, still sees her heroes. A short, dark, square-bodied and square-jawed woman, she has always created fictional men and women who are tall, blond, and blue-eyed, and at least one hero who walks 'as if he had a cape streaming behind him.' She actually affected a cape herself at one time, and a hat which looked like Napoleon's tricorn."

Although Rand, ostensibly, promulgates a philosophy of reason, it can be seen that she frankly appeals to the immature and often highly irrational romanticism of their followers. Reason, according to them, may be an absolute--but it apparently must be backed by highly emotionalized appeals if it is to win over many adherents.

9. The entire objectivist movement has a scriptural, evangelical, and sepulchral quality. Notes John Kobler in this respect: "Now the credo of a steadily-growing literary cult, objectivism, has its scripture, *Atlas Shrugged*, whose idolatrous superheroes both the founder and the faithful quote as reverently as clergymen quote Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; it has its prophets, five in number; and it has its converts, predominantly young people, scattered

throughout the country.” All we need now is objectivism’s incorporation as a church!

10. On May 5, 1968, writing a special twenty-fifth anniversary article, “A Strange Kind of Simplicity,” on *The Fountainhead* in the *New York Times Book Review*, Nora Ephron describes some of the ritualism and idol-worship of the leading objectivists. She notes that, when Nathaniel Branden adopted his pen name, “it is probably no coincidence that his adopted name contains his mentor’s last name (as well as *Ben*, son of?) When he, his future wife Barbara and the O’Connors [Ayn Rand and her husband] moved to New York a year later, Branden became the organizer of a group of Rand devotees who met every Saturday night at Miss Rand’s East 30s apartment. They were known as the Class of 1943 after The Book’s publication date, and Rand referred to them as ‘the children’....” Objectivists occasionally smoke cigarettes with dollar signs on them....Rand is said to wear a gold dollar-sign broach. One would have liked to ask Rand about that broach, but she does not give interviews to non-sympathizers.”

Chapter 11

Objectivism’s Unrealism and Anti-Empiricism

Religious systems are unusually anti-empirical. They are founded mainly on wishful thinking and ignore many of the facts of real life. Objectivism is similarly anti-empirical, in that it makes one pronouncement after another, which is not only without factual data, but actually is contradicted by our knowledge of humans and their behavior. Thus far, throughout this book, I have given many examples of the anti-empirical and unrealistic statements that the objectivists have made. Here are some more of these stunning examples:

1. Branden: "There is only one reality--the reality knowable to reason. And if man does not choose to perceive it, there is nothing else for him to perceive; if it is not of this world that he is conscious, then he is not conscious at all." (1965a).

Reality, or what factually exists, is known to people by their various faculties; and these include perceiving, thinking, emoting, and acting. Reasoning, then, is only one mode of knowing reality; and by itself, without being accompanied by the other modes, it is not a very good means of comprehending the world. There is considerable evidence from John Dewey, George Santayana, and other philosophers that we know reality in both reasoning and non-reasoning ways, (Ellis, 1962, 2001a, 2001b).

Nor is it true to say that if we do not choose to perceive external reality, there is nothing else for us to perceive. As I pointed out previously, people with psychoses often seem to be autistically aware mainly of themselves and their illusions, and not of external reality. Yet it is foolish to say that they perceive nothing or that they are not conscious at all.

2. "Men cannot survive by attempting the method of animals, by rejecting reason and counting on productive men to serve as their prey. Such looters may achieve their goals for the range of a moment, at the price of destruction: the destruction of their victims and their own. As evidence, I offer you any criminal or dictatorship." (Rand,1961c).

The facts clearly show, however, that (a) many criminals and/or dictatorships achieve their goals for far more than a moment--for many years, in some instances; that (b) parasites of various sorts do not necessarily destroy their victims; indeed, some of the "victims" seem to like the parasite very much and to thrive on it; that (c) many parasitic individuals do survive by rejecting reason and counting on other productive individuals to serve as their prey; in fact, many government officials do well for themselves on just this basis.

3. Rand : "Happiness is possible only to a rational man, the man who desires nothing but rational goals, seeks nothing but rational values and finds his joy in nothing but rational actions." (1957).

Since no such super-rational person seems ever to have existed, and some notable degrees of happiness have been experienced during the course of human history by literally billions of people, it should be obvious that this statement has no empirical foundation and consists of incredible wishful thinking.

4. She continues, "Man may permit no breach between body and mind, between action and thought, between his life and his convictions." (1957).

Perhaps not, but somehow, during the 90 plus years of my existence, I have observed numerous individuals--one of them being myself--who have permitted innumerable breaches of body and mind, between thought and action, between their lives and their convictions. And not only have many of these people managed to survive for many years of this kind of "impossible" existence, but--perversely--many of them, including myself, have often been quite happy. How so?

5. "This country--the product of reason--could not survive on the morality of sacrifice," (Rand, 1957).

By objectivist contention, these United States are and have been for three quarters of a century a welfare state; and our people and our

government have lived according to the morality of sacrifice. Still, we do survive.

6. "To exist as a productive being, is to man's self-interest; to attempt to exist as a parasite, is not" (Branden, 1965a).

Although this statement may be true of most people, it is clearly not true of all. People who are not too intelligent, or who are physically handicapped, or who have psychosis--such individuals do sometimes promote their self-interest when they attempt to exist as parasites or dependents. Life would be grimmer and much less self-interested for a large portion of humans if they vainly tried to live up to Rand's standard of productivity!

7. Branden: "The man whose life lacks direction or purpose, the man who has no creative goal, necessarily feels helpless and out of control; the man who feels helpless and out of control, feels inadequate to and unfit for existence; and the man who feels unfit for existence is incapable of enjoying it." (1964b).

Observation of almost any group of individuals will show that many of them have no real direction or purpose in life, and even more of them have no creative goal; but it is clear that not all of these purposeless and uncreative people feel out of control, unfit for existence, and incapable of enjoying life. Some of them seem to be a hell of a lot happier than many of the leading objectivsts are!

Ayn Rand is quoted in *Mademoiselle Magazine* as stating that "if men live according to a rational code of morality which is the objectivist code, they will find their interests don't clash." (1962).

And, in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964), she states:

"There are no conflicts of interests among rational men even in the issue of love. Like any other value, love is not a static quantity to be divided, but an unlimited response to be earned." When you love one friend that is not a threat to the love for another, and neither is your love for the various members of your family, if they have earned it. The most exclusive form--romantic love--does not involve competition. If two men are in love with the same woman, what she feels for either of them is not determined by what she feels for the other. If she chooses one of them, the 'loser' can not have had what the 'winner' has earned.

This is incredibly false. Why? Because--

a. No matter what kind of rational code they live by, people's interests obviously often clash. If I am rational, I may not hate you if you become president of our firm instead of me. But my interest in being the head of the outfit clearly clashes with your interest, and--you have beaten me out! If you dropped dead just before the appointment was made, and I were, therefore, made president, I

might be sorry about your death--but I would be glad that my own interest, rather than yours, was served.

b. Love is hardly "an unlimited response to be earned." No matter what John does to win Mary's love, and no matter how great a guy he is, and how deserving of earning it, if Mary is already obsessively in love with Joe, John has very little chance to win any or much of Mary's responsiveness.

c. The love of one friend frequently is a threat to the love for another--since although you may theoretically love both Joan and Jane equally, if you go to the movies with Joan, you can not very well go to the opera with Jane at the same time. Even in your own family, if you truly care for your three children or your two siblings, you cannot spend a great amount of time alone with one of them, if you are also spending a great deal of time alone with the other.

d. Feelings themselves, whether of love or hatred, are frequently dilutable. If two men are in love with the same woman, what she feels for one of them is determined by what she feels for the other, in many instances. The mere fact that she allows herself to be absorbed in A may prevent her from being absorbed in B, since the quantity of her love may be distinctly limited. Moreover, just because she is madly in love with A, she may think it improper for her also to love B, or she may think she is incapable of so much loving. It is fairly

idiotic, therefore, to say, as Rand does, that "if she chooses one of them, the 'loser' could not have had what the 'winner' has earned." He definitely could have had her love or someone else's love in many instances.

8. Joseph Collins notes of Ayn Rand and her writings, "metaphors are useful in philosophy, but only as directives of the mind toward the particular evidences by which to test and qualify the hypotheses using the metaphors." Her "personifications tend to take possession of the discussion and to lead a life of their own, beyond any possibility of checking them." How true! How fanatically religious!

9. Ayn Rand : "The man who is convinced of his own worthlessness will be drawn to a woman he despises--because she will reflect his own secret self, she will release him from that objective reality in which he is a fraud." (1957).

This is an overgeneralization. Some men who are convinced of their own worthlessness will be drawn to women they despise; but others will be more likely to be drawn to women they highly respect, with whom they would like to identify, and through whose acceptance they will presumably compensate for their own feelings of inadequacy.

10. "In a free society, one does not have to deal with those who are irrational. One is free to avoid them. In a non-free society,

no pursuit of any interests is possible to anyone; nothing is possible but gradual and general destruction" (Rand, 1964).

Hmmm! Objections to these points are:

a. Theoretically you are free to avoid dealing with those who are irrational in a free society, but in practice you are not that free. First of all, you have to eat; so you must deal with irrational bosses, employees, customers, tradesmen, etc. Secondly, you cannot help encountering irrational people everywhere: in social gatherings, in buses, in ball parks, at the beach, in school classes, and everywhere else imaginable. Thirdly, the many irrational people in the world whom you encounter even indirectly often have a definite influence on your life. Thus, even if you have no personal contract with bus drivers, park attendants, taxicab owners, airplane pilots, ticket sellers at theaters, and politicians, these individuals may still exert power over you, and may cause you trouble.

b. In a non-free society--such as a society of serfs or slaves--it is false to say that no pursuit of any interests is possible to anyone. Slaves may collect stamps, listen to music, write poetry, play in ball games, and do innumerable other things in which they are interested.

c. It is also false to say that nothing is possible but "gradual and general destruction" in a non-free society. For one thing, such a society can change (as often has been the case in the past) to a much

freer form of society. For another thing, even when slavery or some form of serfdom exists, a stable social order may remain for decades or centuries, and gradual and general destruction is by no means necessary.

11. Ayn Rand (1957, 1961b, 1964,) and Nathaniel Branden (1965b,) insist that objectivism is solidly rooted in the truism that people have to survive, and they cannot possibly exist without reason. As I have previously pointed out, there is no reason why people have to survive--although, personally, I hope that they do. The fact remains that society manages to avoid total annihilation--even though all shades of irrational views run riot in their members' cerebral cortexes and behaviors, ranging from fanatical Christianity, Judaism, and Moslemism, to fanatical objectivism. If people can survive this *mélange* of irrationality, maybe they can survive anything!

Chapter 12

Ayn Rand's Condemning and Damning Attitudes

At the core of much neurotic disturbance, I have contended since 1955, is the human tendency to be a condemner: to excoriate yourself and others as total human beings because you or they have acted badly or wrongly, (Ellis, 1957, 1962, 1973, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003). Similar views on the essence of mental illness have also been voiced by Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, Carl Rogers, and many other psychotherapists.

It is important to realize that at the core of fanatical religiosity is a severely blaming attitude. For many--though not necessarily all--extremely religious individuals inordinately condemn themselves for their own errors (or "sins") and just as severely, damn others for their mistakes. Typically, the Judeo-Christian religion has heaven and its hell; and we all know where the vile sinners end up and what happens to them!

Castigating humans for their weaknesses and errors is a theological process. Even when they make serious blunders, volitionally, the blaming process includes first, a sane, and then an "unsane" fanatically religious judgment, (Korzybski, 1933). The sane judgment is: "You have done the wrong thing, and that is unfortunate, regrettable, and inefficient." This judgment, if we stopped right there,

would help people see their errors, and would partly point the way to correcting them in the future.

The judgment that blaming or condemning people add is: "Because you have done the wrong thing, you are a bad person, a sinner, a worthless individual." Not only, in this statement, are people's acts or performances judged, but they, whole humans, are judged along with their acts. This global judgment, when it is harsh and denunciatory, means several things:

1. People, globally, are seen as wrong for doing wrong acts.
2. They are viewed as, in all probability, incessantly doing wrong acts, since what else can a *bad person* do?
3. There is seen as something essentially rotten about them, something that makes them do wrong, and something with which they were probably born, and that most likely cannot ever be changed.
4. Because they are essentially putrid individuals, they "obviously" deserve to be punished; thereby they can perhaps atone for their horrible sins.
5. If their acts are bad enough, and they are therefore horrible people, they deserve to be punished forever, and to roast eternally in some kind of hell.

Now all these points that are hypothesized about the person who volitionally performs wrong, inefficient, or immoral acts are theological

constructs, which are essentially non-provable. 1. How can people be globally rotten because they have done a wrong thing, or even if they do many wrong things? They may be very peaceful, kind individuals who ran amok on a single occasion, and are, at heart, mainly interested in helping rather than in hurting people. For one of their acts to tell us very much about them, it would have to be incessantly repeated. At the same time that we call a person a rotter for doing a wrong deed, how can we ever know that s/he will always, incessantly, do similar wrong deeds?

At the very least, when we make a global rating of a person, because we have rated one of her/his performances as execrable, we are making a huge overgeneralization, and doing it without any empirical evidence. At most, we are making a global judgment which is often neither provable nor disprovable, and therefore has a theological nature. It is based on faith unfounded on fact.

Let us not forget, in this connection, that practically no humans do all bad acts. Even the Bluebeards, the Hitlers, and the gangsters of the world sometimes are honest with their associates, reliable, kind to their family members, hardworking, fair in many ways, and often gentle. If a Nathan Leopold kills a young boy for a thrill, can we justly say that Leopold is entirely no good; or can we only justifiably say that this aspect of him is heinous, but that he as a whole person has many

good and bad traits, and cannot very well be given one global rating? If we absolutely and positively insist that a man who has murdered another is a thorough bastard, are we not making a religious, faith-inspired, rather than a specific, empirically based, judgment of his act?

2. How can we be sure (or even reasonably certain) that, if a person does a mistaken act (or even a series of wrong acts) today, he will continue to behave badly tomorrow, and that therefore she is a bad person? How do we know that, one of these days, he will not save someone's life at the risk of her own, or volunteer for some valuable medical experiments, or devote himself to helping others, to invent something that will be of enormous help to humanity, or otherwise do many more good than bad deeds? Of course, we do not know.

Only at the very end of his life, if he has practically only behaved poorly and never behaved well would we be scientifically justified in saying that a person consistently made grave errors and was exceptionally fallible. Even then, we might not be justified in calling him a rotter, because that term has connotations that go far beyond our acknowledging his consistent mistake-making.

3. Even if we know that an individual consistently makes errors and we are pretty sure that she has a strong tendency to make them, we cannot conclude that there is something essentially rotten about her that makes her do wrong. She may have merely been

conditioned, from early childhood, to behave badly; or she may have acquired a picture of herself as someone who cannot do well, and may living up to this false picture.

There is no evidence that a wrong-doer cannot ever be changed; for even if he has a genetic defect, it is possible that some kind of retraining will compensate for it, and if he has a poor self-image that is causing much of his bad behavior, it is certainly possible for him to change this image and to act much differently. So he may well behave better in the future--as Nathan Leopold finally came to do--in spite of his execrable early acts.

4. No matter how poorly anyone performs, and no matter how consistently they keeps performing in this manner during the entire course of their life, there is no reason why she should be verbally damned and physically punished for their behavior. Sometimes, if this will truly appear to be helpful, she may be specifically penalized. Thus, if a child keeps spitting our her food at meals or breaking windows in her home, her parents may calmly, penalize her, in order to teach her that certain poor behavior has negative consequences, and that therefore she'd better learn to control or change it.

Penalization, however, is not punishment. Punishment consists of (a) penalizing the individual in order to help him change, and (b)

condemning him and behaving cruelly to him in order to make him feel like a louse and have him atone for his sins. Punishment (along with damnation) has the element of deprecating the individual as a person; while penalizing only has the element of showing him what the consequences of his acts are and trying to help him change them for the better.

Penalizing an individual is often sane and instructive; punishing him is magical and theological. It means that he is no good, and not merely that his acts are poor, and that he absolutely should be (by some inexorable powers that be) put into hell, and not that it may be better to give him some penalty in order to help learn. Penalizing teaches the individual the sane philosophy, "It would be better if you did not act the way you're acting, because life would be more advantageous if you did not." Punishment shows her the Jehovian philosophy, "You ought not behave the way you are behaving, because I say you oughtn't. And because you're acting this horrible way, I am going to see that you are condemned and downed as a whole person."

Where penalizing, moreover, often aids the individual to change, punishment frequently does the opposite. For when he is condemned and punished for his "sins," he frequently comes to accept himself as an arrant sinner--meaning, one who cannot help sinning. So he gives up, feels that he is hopeless, believes that he cannot stop doing badly

in the present and future, and therefore continues to behave poorly. Although sometimes punishment, rather than penalization, has results, most of the time it seems to do more harm than good.

5. The idea that an individual, because of her bad deeds, is an inveterate sinner and that she will eternally be condemned is of course a classic religious notion, and has little chance of being empirically confirmed or denied. It is the apotheosis of the fanatically religious attitude of blaming the individual as a whole for his or her poor acts.

For the foregoing reasons, it may be clear that when humans are condemned *in toto* for their poor acts, considered to be worthless, absolute villains, an objective, scientific, and empirically-based judgmental attitude toward their ineffectual and antisocial behavior is transcended. In its place thrives an absolutistic, moralistic, fanatically religious-pervaded outlook. This outlook is particularly common among Ayn Rand and the objectivists--who, of all contemporary social thinkers, seem to be extremely condemnatory. In spite of their occasional protestations to the contrary, they do not merely judge the individual's acts or performances as inefficacious or wrong. They covertly and overtly condemn, damn, and attempt to crucify her. Here are some typical examples in this respect.

1. "An essential characteristic of Galt--and of Ayn Rand--is a profound contempt for evil, a contempt based on the conviction that evil is the irrational and, therefore, the blind, the aberrated, the impotent....Evil is to be despised, not hated or feared," (Branden, 1965b).

Not only, alas, is evil looked upon with contempt by Rand and the objectivists, but the evil person as well is denigrated. He, rather than evil itself, is what they really despise. Rand does not merely feel sorry for him or try to avoid him; they would like to see him annihilated. And if their words would kill, he would be dead.

2. In the "Horror File," that appeared regularly in the *Objectivist*, and that quoted statements from other publications that the objectivists consider horrendous, an example is quoted from Chaplain Henry T. Close of the Georgia Mental Health Institute: "Psychotherapy is a deliberate and intensive relationship between two persons whose goal is mutual forgiveness," (*Objectivist*, October, 1966).

This statement is horrible to objectivism because, obviously, objectivists do not believe in any form of forgiveness. If people do wrong, they say, they should be condemned and punished, and to think that any psychotherapists would forgive their clients for their

wrong-doing, and that the clients in turn might forgive the therapist for his mistakes, is frightful.

3. In the "Horror File" of November, 1966, George N. Crocker, writing in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, cites as a "horror" the "messianic complex of Dr. Brock Chisholm." According to Crocker, "Chisholm is a Canadian who fancies psychiatry's mission to be to put an end to the difference between right and wrong."

Actually--as the rabid objectivists could easily discover--Chisholm never tried to put an end to the difference between right and wrong; but for many years he was one of the most civilized and sane psychiatrists in the field, and fought against blaming and condemning humans for their errors. It is typical of the objectivists that whenever they find that people like Chisholm are opposed to flagellating humans for their mistakes, they immediately conclude that they are trying to eradicate the difference between right and wrong. Objectivists seem unable to understand that it is possible to have a fairly clear-cut code of morality, and to designate certain things as right and other things as wrong under that code, and still not condemn the people who do not exactly follow that code and who end up by being wrong. They are so intent on castigating wrongdoers that they believe that all non-castigators think that everything is "right."

4. Writing about modern authors and artists, Ayn Rand says: "The exponents of modern movements do not seek to convert you to their values--they haven't any--but to destroy yours. Nihilism and destruction are the almost explicit goals of today's trends--and the horror is that these trends move on, unopposed." (1966a).

Note here that Rand does not merely disagree strongly with modern authors and artists--she tries to pulverize them. She falsely states that they have no values of their own, and in addition are out to destroy those of their audiences. She implies that they all are nihilistic and destructive--which is hardly true; and she as much as says that hanging from the yardarm would hardly be good enough for them.

5. Not only the leading objectivists themselves, but many of their fanatical followers as well, unusually condemn any opponents of this system. Thus, John Kobler tells us that when a *Newsweek* book reviewer, Leslie Hanscom, wrote that "although Ayn Rand, the philosopher, is of questionable nature, compared with Ayn Rand, the novelist, she towers like Aristotle," *Newsweek* received a number of scurrilous letters about Hanscom. One of them said "Vicious, vile, and obscene.... An act of unprecedented depravity.... Irresponsible hoodlums.... Since you propose to behave like cockroaches, be prepared to be treated as such." Many objectivists sent threatening letters to three of the *Newsweek* advertisers, complaining that they

should stop using this periodical because of the terrible attacks on Rand.

Newsweek also reported on a Nathaniel Branden Institute meeting that Ayn Rand addressed, and noted: "'Her books,' said one member of the congregation, 'are so good that most people should not be allowed to read them. I used to want to lock up nine-tenths of the world in a cage, and after reading her books, I want to lock them all up.'"

This does not mean, of course, that all followers of objectivism are hostile individuals; nor that those who are were necessarily made so by Ayn Rand and her associates. My impression is that in many or most instances, their extreme hostility existed before they became objectivists--and that it attracted them to the movement, because the movement itself is so damning of literally millions of people. That their hostility was often appreciably increased--as in the case of the supporter cited in the preceding paragraph--I do not doubt.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that fanatical orthodox religions are frequently accused of making their followers extremely rigid, dogmatic, and hostile. This may sometimes be true; but it is just as true that a good number of rigid, dogmatic, and hostile people find a fine home in various orthodox religious groups, and that is why they join these groups--because they already are emotionally

disturbed. Thus, I have noted, that a good number of individuals who are raised as non-believers or as reformed Jews or liberal Christians tend to join and adhere to fanatical Jewish and Christian sects once they become emotionally disturbed. I think that this is what happens in the objectivist religious movement. Once individuals become mentally aberrated, and in particular very hostile, they often get fanatically attracted to objectivism.

6. Patricia Donegan has independently noted, "Whatever power Miss Rand has as a writer is expressed in an immense hostility, a real malevolence that takes joy in the sight of destruction.... It is dispiriting to think of an outpouring of hate on this scale on any audience."

In her response to Ms. Donegan's article about herself in *Commonweal*, Ayn Rand was asked:

"Don't you hate the inadequate, the weak, the stupid, and the helpless?" She replied: "I hate no one. I hate the doctrines that preach the sacrifice of human values to non-values. As to the people who preach such doctrines, I do not hate them, I despise them." What Rand apparently fails to see here is that hating and despising human individuals stem from the same source: the desire to put them down, to denigrate them as people. This desire may often stem from a

defense against the underlying feelings of inadequacy of the hater and the despiser.

7. When asked at one of her New York lectures, "How is it that we Americans condemn the Russians when we discriminate against the Negro and the yellow races?" Ayn Rand retorted: "If you don't know the difference between Americans and Russians, you deserve to find out." (Kobler, 1961.)

This is reported by several observers to be fairly typical of the manner in which Rand answered questions at her lectures when the questioner was obviously not on her side. At the regular Nathaniel Branden Institute lectures in which she participated, only those who were regular students of objectivism and attended several sessions were allowed to ask questions. When there or elsewhere a negative question crept in, Rand frequently replied angrily or despairingly. Condemnation of others was apparent in her talks as well as her writings.

8. Branden indicates that if an intelligent objectivist looks at a scoundrel, he will be the one who "recognizes to what extent this person, in his craven irrationality, has betrayed his status as a human being--and feels contempt." (1966e).

What Branden did not see is that it is quite possible for a rational person to view one who has done a bad deed, to accept calmly the fact

that the wrong-doer acted irrationally, and to feel that the actor has not betrayed his status as a human being, but has actually proved it by being what most humans frequently are--fallible. Where Ayn Rand and objectivists will feel contempt for such a mistake-making human, a sensible non-objectivist will feel pity and will often do his best to help this person commit fewer bad deeds in the future.

9. Branden (1965b): "That a concentration-camp sadist may bring his mother flowers every Sunday, does not mean that he is less than totally evil; that a James Taggart may have his moments of remorse, does not mean that he is less than totally evil."

Note this business of a wrong-doer being totally evil. Surely, not even Heliogabalus, Nero, Savonarola, and Hitler were totally evil; but the objectivist obsession with turning a person who commits misdeeds into an absolute monster can manufacture total evilness in virtually any mistake-maker--at least any non-objectivist wrong-doer!

10. "Since men are born *tabula rasa*, both cognitively and morally, a rational man regards strangers as innocent until proved guilty, and grants them that initial good will in the name of their human potential." Then he judges them according to the moral character they have shown. If they are guilty of major evils, his good will is replaced by contempt and moral condemnation (Rand, 1964).

Could anything be clearer than that? Since humans, says Ayn Rand in this passage, can freely choose to act well or badly, if they choose the latter course, and if they commit even a few major sins in the course of their entire lifetime, their whole character is rotten, and they should be condemned morally and utterly despised. As I hear it, this moralistic and perfectionist demand on people is almost exactly that of Jehovah, the God of the Jews and the Christians. Fanatical Jews and Christians often see Jehovah as a highly demanding God, who created very fallible humans, and then devoted much of his time to paranoically spying on them, to see how many sins they committed. As soon as Jehovah discovered that any people actually were involved in major wrongdoings, he hurled down his thunderbolts, punished them severely (e.g., by turning them into pillars of salt or having women stoned to death if they were taken in adultery), and condemned them to eternal roasting pits in hell. Is the fanatical objectivist creed of damnation really any different?

11. Rand: "One must never fail to pronounce moral judgment....To abstain from condemning a torturer, is to become an accessory to the torture and murder of his victims. The moral principle to adopt in this issue, is: 'Judge, and be prepared to be judged.'" (1966).

It is clear, again, from this passage, that it is not merely people's acts, but the *persons themselves* who are to be judged and condemned. It is also fairly obvious that the objectivists want to judge, and enjoy judging and condemning, their fellowmen.

12. Ayn Rand: If we did not abjectly evade reality by claiming that some contemptible liar "means well," that a mooching bum "can't help it," that a criminal "doesn't know any better," that communists are merely "agrarian reformers," the history of the past few decades, or centuries, would have been different, (1964).

It certainly would have been! In the United States and various democratic countries, it would have been much more fascistic! Ayn Rand obviously craves, here, not to understand wrong-doers (or any political group with which she disagrees), but to ruthlessly squelch, persecute, annihilate them. All the humanitarian gains our courts, probation departments, and prison systems during the last century would be immediately wiped out, if she had her way, and replaced with vigorously condemnation of both unconvicted and convicted defendants.

Chapter 13

Other Fanatically Religious Characteristics of Ayn Rand and Objectivism

Probably no orthodox religious group includes all the aspects of fanatical religiosity that I listed in Chapter 6, or includes them all to an equal degree. Some religions are more fanatical than others; some emphasize ritual; some are more obsessed with a personalized God who is worshipped and prayed to; some are exceptionally condemning of human beings; and some stress other aspects of fanatic religiosity.

I have no intention, therefore, of forcing objectivism into the procrustean bed of religion by insisting that it possesses all the major aspects of devout faith, unfounded on fact, that are characteristic of many other orthodox faiths. In some respects, it is probably more religious than many other creeds--in regard, for example, to its absolutism and its moralistic avenging--and in other respects it is less divinely-oriented than many other sects--for example, in regard to ritualism, prayer, direct super-naturalism, and life after death.

To close this discussion of the fanatical religiosity of Ayn Rand and objectivism, let us consider some remaining major aspects of true believers and see how devout objectivists tend to take on these characteristics.

Obsessiveness and compulsiveness. As can be seen from much of the material in this book, Ayn Rand and her devout objectivists followers are obsessed with several aspects of human life, ruminate about these interminably, and drag them into all possible discussions.

For example, they are obsessed with the ideas that the free market is the solution to all economic problems; that any form of statism is horrendous; that productivity and achievement are the 'be-alls' and 'end-alls' of human existence; that humans must live by rigid principles and that if they in the slightest way, fail to live up to these principles they are the lowest vermin, and deserve to be punished and annihilated; that reason is an absolute and is the answer to all individual and social difficulties. And so on.

In addition, dyed-in-the-wool objectivists seem to be compulsively driven to be enormously successful, to make a great deal of money, to dress in a highly conventional manner, to proselytize everywhere they go for converts to objectivism, and to carry their politico-economic philosophies into every other aspect of their lives. This does not mean that every single student of objectivism is obsessive-compulsive and is a candidate for the mental hospital. But the majority of those who adhere to objectivist creeds tend to be obsessed--just as many rigidly orthodox Jews, Catholics, and other religions appear to have obsessive-compulsive traits.

It may be objected, in this connection, that (a) vast numbers of both objectivist and non-objectivist, are rather severely disturbed emotionally, and that therefore the fact that many of them are seriously obsessive-compulsive, is rather meaningless; and that (b)

the fact that many or most people who follow a certain set of principles are disturbed does not invalidate their principles themselves. Both these objections are at least partly true; but they both can be answered as follows:

1. I believe that if an empirical study of the emotional disturbance of objectivists were made it would show that there is a significant connection between their disturbances and the tenets of Rand's objectivism. For these tenets are essentially obsessive-compulsive and they are presented (as any number of the statements cited in this book will show) in a distinctly obsessed, frantically driving manner. It is therefore not purely coincidental that the frenetic drive of Ayn Rand and other leading objectivists is closely paralleled by the same kind of compulsive preaching on the part of so many of the followers of objectivism.

2. Although disturbed individuals can certainly believe in sensible principles--as some of my own still emotionally aberrated followers dogmatically believe in my principles of rational emotive behavior therapy--my hypothesis is that many of the followers of objectivism are attracted to its tenets because these views are dogmatic, intolerant, and absolutist, and that these followers are helped to be more disturbed because Ayn Rand and objectivism teach them to be rigid.

I am hypothesizing, in other words, that true and fanatical believers in an orthodox code tend to select this belief-system in the first place because it is concurrent with their own aberrant way of thinking; and that, in the second place, they find in this system supposed validation of and justification for their bigotry and unscientific thinking--and therefore tend to become more emotionally disturbed and/or defensive than they were at the start.

Devout religion, as I have stated elsewhere is often dependency; and severe dependency is common in emotional illness, (1983, 2004b). Rand's objectivism is typical of the religious complex in this respect, since its followers, although ostensibly standing on their own feet and thinking for themselves, actually depend on its unverified assumptions and absolutist rulings to make themselves feel better, and to distract themselves from underlying feelings of inferiority; and then they become, through this dependency, more emotionally bollixed up than they ever were before. Many of them are compulsively driven to become objectivists. They then become obsessed with objectivist tenets; and they thereby enhance rather than understand, and attack their basic obsessive-compulsive traits.

Mysticism. On the surface, Rand's objectivism is as non-mystical as any creed could possibly be. She is always talking about reason, and claims to follow the laws of logic very closely and to be scientific

and empirical. It does not believe in the usual kinds of gods and demons; she rants against human intuition and whim; and it objects to the so-called mystical experiences of saints, sages, and others.

Moreover, objectivists use the word "mystic" as a pejorative term. Ayn Rand refers, for example, to most modern intellectuals as mystics or witch doctors. And one of Nathaniel Branden's best-known essays is called "Mental Health versus Mysticism and Self-Sacrifice" (1961b), and is reprinted in Ayn Rand's *The Virtue of Selfishness*, (1964).

One definition of mysticism, however, is "any doctrine that asserts the possibility of attaining knowledge of spiritual truths through intuition acquired by fixed meditation." Although objectivism does not directly assert this possibility, it often implies it. Thus, it continually states such spiritual "truths" as: Capitalism is the only economic system based on rationality; reason is an absolute; and humans have an inalienable right to be free from governmental controls. Since Rand's philosophy gives no good reasons or empirical evidence to back these vague axioms, and since it seems highly probable that such statements are not essentially provable or disprovable by linking them to concrete observations, they seem to be arrived at by intuition, acquired by an obsessive kind of "thinking." You apparently have to acquire the knack of putting yourself into a

special kind of objectivist trance state in order to come up with the certainty that these “truths” are true.

If Rand’s objectivist ethics, economics, psychology, and philosophy are not highly mystical revelations, they are certainly reasonably good facsimiles. Although devout objectivists do not believe that it is possible to achieve communion with God through contemplation and love, they often do believe that Ayn Rand is the greatest Goddess of them all, and that you can achieve communion with Her through contemplation and love of objectivism.

Ritualism. Compared to most other religions, objectivism has relatively little truck with ritualism. But it does appear to have its own brand of cultish and ritualistic doings. D.J. Hamblin writes in “The Cult of Angry Ayn Rand,” It is ironic, considering Miss Rand’s utter contempt for both Communism and religion, that her followers approach the task of learning her philosophy with the almost conspiratorial fervor of a Communist cell meeting and the awed respect of a communicant. An observer in Detroit once found one of the N.B.I. [Nathaniel Branden Institute] sessions ‘almost liturgical: an immaculate white-clothed altar with a tape-recorder tabernacle.’” (1967).

John Kobler points out that in *Atlas Shrugged*, when Galt decides to give America a last chance, after darkness and gloom have

enveloped the continent, he raises his hand and "over the desolate earth he traced the sign of the dollar." (1961). In addition to the cape which she often affects, Kobler tells us that Rand "wears pinned to her sturdy bosom a solid gold dollar sign." Kobler is borne out by the picture of Ayn Rand which appears on the cover of the paperback edition of *The Virtue of Selfishness*. There she is, proudly standing in what seems to be the Wall Street district of New York City, with a gold dollar sign pin at the top of her dress.

So the objectivists do practice ritualism. Not quite as much as some devout Jews and Catholics. Who knows, given enough time, how much more they will eventually have?

Chapter 14

The Religiosity of Ayn Rand and Objectivists

As a result of reading objectivist literature, as because of my personal talks with a score of dyed-in-the-wool objectivists, I became increasingly convinced that Ayn Rand's objectivism is a major fanatical religion, and it is often hyper-critical, in that it masquerades as an anti-religious philosophy. I also became convinced, from seeing several of my therapy clients who were devotees of objectivism that their allegiance to the views of Ayn Rand and her group added to their serious emotional problems, and helped block them from adopting a rational emotive behavior therapy outlook that would enable them to become less disturbed.

Although I made it clear, during my public talks, that rational emotive behavior therapy and Rand's objectivist psychology were miles apart in several important respects, and that I considered objectivism to be an irrational, fanatically religious view, a number of my own and Rand's adherents kept confusing the two systems of thought. Largely in order to put an end to this confusion, I had the idea of having a public debate with one of the leading objectivists, to demonstrate the difference of the viewpoints.

Having heard that Rand refuses to participate in any debates, I suggested to Nathaniel Branden that the two of us air our

disagreements in public. At first, he was hesitant, but he finally agreed to accept this challenge and even seemed to become increasingly enthusiastic about the project as the time for our debate, May 26, 1967, grew closer. So did I. For the more I read and reread objectivist literature, the more convinced I became that objectivism is a religion, and the more eager I was to show in detail how it has little to do with rational emotive behavior therapy.

Branden was exacting about the conditions of our debate; and, although I thought some of his conditions were a little too restrictive, I agreed to go along with them. We therefore agreed (1) that the debate was to be about "Rational Emotive Psychotherapy vs. Objectivist Psychology" and that it was only incidentally to consider problems of epistemology, economics, politics, and other aspects of objectivism; (2) that we would discuss objectivist REBT ideas and would refrain from personal invective; (3) that, since I had suggested the debate and was the challenger, I would be the first speaker and rebuttalist, and Branden would be the second; and (4) that neither I nor Branden could release tape recordings of the debate for general distribution without the consent of the other.

As far as I can see, I carried out these conditions to the letter. The first part of my formal presentation was devoted to the main differences between objectivist psychology and rational emotive

behavior therapy, especially in regard to human worth and self-esteem, (and was a briefer version of the material included in Chapters 1 and 2 of the present book). The second part of my presentation was devoted to showing how objectivism is a fanatical religion while rational emotive behavior therapy is not (and was a brief summary of the material included in Chapters 6 to 14 of this book). The material on economics, politics, and assorted evils of objectivism (Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this book) was omitted from the debate, except for a few minor references, which were given as illustrative examples under the main headings of psychology, psychotherapy, and religiosity.

In spite of sticking rigorously to the conditions of the debate, the objectivists who were present, and Branden in particular, became incensed, vitriolic, and accused me of skullduggery on several counts. In a letter written to me three months after the debate, Branden put his objections as follows:

1. "Contrary to our stated understanding and written agreement, your presentation was *not* a discussion of 'Rational Emotive Psychotherapy vs. Objectivist Psychology.' It was merely an attack on Objectivist Psychology--or, more precisely, on what you claim to be Objectivist Psychology. I would never have consented to a debate on the subject of 'Objectivist Psychology--Pro and Con,' with the defensiveness on my part that that would imply. Yet, by violating

our agreement, you, in effect, tricked me into participating in such a debate.”

Yes, Branden is partly right here: My presentation was mainly (though not merely) an attack on objectivist psychology. That was what I intended all along, since my primary motive for the debate was to show how untenable objectivist psychology is. Whatever gave Nathaniel Branden the idea that a debate entitled “Rational Emotive Psychotherapy *versus* Objectivist Psychology” was *not* going to consist largely of an attack by me on his and Ayn Rand’s positions, I know not. *Versus*, in every dictionary that I have ever seen, means *against*. I am not only for rational emotive behavior therapy, but *against* objectivist psychology. And that is what I made clear in my debate presentation--apparently to the discomfiture of many objectivists in the audience.

2. Said Branden: “Many members of the audience, who were curious to learn about your psychological theories, complained that they had failed to do so, that they had not heard the discussion promised them in the announcements; justifiably, they felt somewhat defrauded.”

Where Branden and his followers ever got the notion that I was going to expound on the details of rational emotive therapy in the course of the debate, I again do not know. My psychological theories

are described in detail in many books and articles, for all who want to read them. They were clearly mentioned, although briefly, many times in the course of my presentations. For his own purposes, apparently, Branden would have much preferred me to stay with my theories and pretty much away from his; but that is hardly my idea of a debate. The “defrauded” members of the audience can easily come to my lectures and workshops (of which I give fifty or more a year at the Albert Ellis Institute in New York City), and would do well, along with Branden, to stop gratuitously assuming that a debate is merely a didactic presentation of two different theoretical views. Branden, in his letter to me, continued:

3. “We had discussed in advance and had agreed in writing that the debate was to be a serious intellectual discourse, concerned solely with our respective *ideas*, and that no form of personal invective was to be permitted. You knew that I would not consent to appear on any other terms. You breached this agreement in at least two respects.

“First, you evidently believed that if you quoted from objectivist writings in a sufficiently sarcastic and sneering manner, that would constitute an acceptable substitute for intellectual argumentation--and you conducted the debate on that premise, thus robbing the occasion of any quality of scientific seriousness.”

I certainly quoted from Randian objectivist writings in a vigorous and emphatic manner--but was hardly, as those neutral individuals who were present at the debate will attest, sarcastic and sneering. On the other hand (as I shall show later in this chapter), Branden was sometimes sarcastic and sneering and was frequently almost as demagogic as the worst kind of political haranguer. As for the objectivists in the audience, they were considerably worse than he. Not only did they loudly cheer his sarcasm and demagoguery in many instances, but they frequently booed and hissed when I made a telling point against one of Rand's sacred tenets. As many neutral members of the audience later remarked, their conduct was "frightening," in that they sounded almost like an audience of Hitler's or Stalin's. Any quality of scientific seriousness that the debate could have attained was constantly corrupted by the antics of the objectivist contingent.

4. Branden: "Second, you launched into a vitriolic, irrelevant and gratuitous attack on the lack of believability (to you) of Ayn Rand's fictional heroes--thus causing Miss Rand, who was one of my guests that evening, to be insulted in a context where she had no means to protest or answer you. Your comments had nothing whatever to do with my psychological theories, they were incoherent and devoid of intellectual content, and appeared to be motivated by some sudden explosion of personal hostility."

What Branden refers to here is that, in the course of my attack on the fanatical religiosity of the objectivists, I made the same point that I make in Chapter 10 of this book. What I said exactly was this: "Like most religious-minded groups, the objectivists have this hero-making tendency; because they, too, cannot seem to be happy with unadorned reality but must incessantly deodorize and perfume it. Here are some examples of their hero-worshipping tendencies:

"Nathaniel Branden tells us, in *Who is Ayn Rand?*, that 'Ayn Rand is not the first writer to project a hero who is a genius; nor is she the first writer to project a hero who fights courageously to achieve his chosen goals. But she *is* the first to project a hero who is a hero *all of the time*--that is, a hero who does not go out to fight a great battle and then come home to marry a *hausfrau* and to live his *private* life by a less demanding code of values.' Branden is right: Ayn Rand's heroes in her novels, such as Howard Roark and John Galt, are utterly impossible humans--or, rather, super-humans. They have no flaws whatever; and are literally out of this world. It would be as easy for one of us mere mortals to maintain a friendly relationship with an Ayn Rand hero as it would be for us to befriend Jehovah or Jesus Christ."

In the midst of my saying this, Ayn Rand, who was sitting near the front of the audience, became terribly disturbed and jumped up, exclaiming, "I am not going to listen to this debate!" She seemed to

be trying to leave the auditorium (which happened to be the ballroom of the New Yorker hotel, where some eleven hundred people were tightly packed to listen to the proceedings), but was dissuaded from doing so by friends around her. Branden then angrily jumped up himself and shouted into the microphone that he did not think it ethical or honorable for me to attack a person who by the rules of the occasion was not free to speak for herself. For this statement the objectivists in the audience applauded him widely.

Now there are several interesting points to be noted about this exchange:

a. My attack on the unbelievability of Ayn Rand's fictional heroes was hardly vitriolic (though it was certainly forceful). It was completely relevant to the main point I was making in this part of my presentation--that objectivism is hero-worshipping and hence fanatically religious. It was hardly gratuitous, since Rand's novels and their fictional heroes are the very core of objectivism, and it was quite impossible, of course, for me to discuss objectivist psychology during the debate without simultaneously referring continually to Rand, her writings, and her heroes. In fact, the packet of free material given out by the objectivists to the members of the audience at the debate was enclosed in a folder from the Nathaniel Branden Institute. The first paragraph read: "Visitors may attend a limited number of NBI

lectures--provided that they (like enrolled students) have read *Atlas Shrugged*, are in basic agreement with its philosophy, and have a serious interest in acquiring a fuller knowledge and understanding of this philosophy."

What is more (as I said later in the debate in answer to Branden's ungracious interruption), all the objectivist writers continually quote John Galt, Howard Roark, and other of Rand's heroes in their nonfictional presentations on objectivism; so it is hardly unseemly for me to refer to and quote from these same heroes!

b. If Rand really felt insulted by my referring to her novel heroes as "utterly impossibly humans," then she is indeed easy to insult--and could use several sessions of rational emotive behavior therapy! As I teach my REBT patients, human beings only become "insulted" when they *take too seriously* the barbs of others, and essentially *agree* with these others that, yes, they (the "insulted" ones) *are* somewhat worthless individuals.

If Ayn Rand were truly in good mental health (not to mention as "heroic" as many of the objectivists like to think of themselves as being), she would surely not take my accusations too seriously, and would merely convince herself, calmly and collectedly, that her heroes are not really "utterly impossible humans," would smilingly think of me as being at least slightly addled, and would listen to the rest of my

accusations with equanimity. The fact that she apparently did seriously upset herself and (according to Branden) felt “insulted” lends considerable extra weight to the point I made during the debate and that I make in Chapter 2 of this book: that objectivists do *not* have what I would call real self-acceptance, but merely accept themselves (or, in their terminology, esteem themselves) because they perform well or because others accept their views. If both Rand and Branden can so easily disturb themselves by my attack on the believability of Rand’s heroes, we can well imagine how upsettable other objectivists may be!

c. My comments about Rand’s heroes definitely did have something to do with Branden’s psychological theories, since these theories (as he acknowledges throughout his writings) are based on the views of Howard Roark and, especially, John Galt. As can be seen by any unprejudiced observer who reads the above statement I made about Roark and Galt, my comments were hardly “incoherent and devoid of intellectual content,” as Branden alleged. And his supposition that my comments “appeared to be motivated by some sudden explosion of personal hostility” is indeed a lulu! I do not hate either Rand or Branden; nor any other objectivists. I do deplore and detest fanatical objectivism. From Rand’s and Branden’s comments during the debate, as well as the tone of his subsequent letter to me, I

suspect (though I am by no means sure) that they may now loathe me. If so, that is too bad; but I feel no personal hostility toward them.

d. Just why it was unfair of me to excoriate some of Ayn Rand's fictional characterizations "in a context where she had no means to protest or answer," is something I do not understand. Writers of novels continually bear the brunt of attacks by critics, teachers, lecturers, preachers, and other publicists to whom they cannot very well immediately reply. If they are not willing to take this sort of criticism, would it not be better for them to refrain from publishing? The objectivists themselves consistently attack writers, painters, musicians, and other artists; and I have never noticed that they give the persons they attack equal space to reply in their publications. When Branden published his accusatory letter to me in the December, 1967, issue of *The Objectivist*, he did not apprise me of this publication, or give me space to reply.

In almost any debate on a given issue--such as communism, Catholicism, objectivism, or what you will--the ideas of the major proponents of the view being debated are criticized by at least one of the debaters. And no one expects these proponents, even if they happen to be present in the audience, to rise to the defense of their own views--or to cringe and feel insulted as these views are attacked. Branden has a rare notion, indeed, of what is fair in a debate!

e. When Branden rose to Ayn Rand's defense after I had questioned the believability of her fictional heroes, he said that he did not think it ethical or honorable for me to attack a person who by the rules of the occasion was not free to speak for herself. In this statement, he falsely accused me of attacking Rand when I actually attacked some of her ideas and characterizations; and he called me unethical and dishonorable for doing what is virtually always done during debates. Were his statements about me fair or non-hostile?

5. Branden: "There is still another area in which you violated our agreement. You went out of your way, in advance of the debate, to stress that you did not want to discuss politics or economics. I, of course, agreed with this, since these subjects were entirely irrelevant to the occasion. However, during the debate, you felt impelled to make a number of snide comments about capitalism and the American businessman, which did not bear on our discussion in any way whatever and which, again, appeared to have been motivated by some sort of incomprehensible personal hostility."

I did not go out of my way, in advance of the debate, to stress that I did not want to discuss politics or economics. Nathaniel Branden was the one who stressed this; and I largely went along with him, because I knew that we had more than enough material to cover in the debate without these issues being importantly involved in it. I did

point out on a few occasions before the debate that we both would probably have to discuss politics and economics *incidentally*, since objectivists theory in particular is based on a very pronounced view of economic and political affairs.

The “number of snide comments about capitalism and the American businessmen,” which I made in the course of the debate seems to have consisted solely of the following statements:

“Religionists, because they believe out of blind faith rather than because of empirical evidence, frequently resort to arguments ad-hominem: that is, they appeal to people’s prejudices rather than to their reason, and they attack their opponents in a personal manner, rather than dealing with the subject under discussion. This kind of argument ad-hominem is a favorite resort of objectivist writers. Of the literally scores of examples of such irrational arguments in objectivist literature, let me now cite a few:

“ ‘The businessman has raised men’s standards of living--but the intellectual has dropped men’s standard of thought to the level of an impotent savage,’” (Rand, 1964). First of all, this comparison is irrelevant, since it implies that the businesspeople, because they have raised our standard of living, have also raised our intellectual standard. Something of the reverse, of course, may well be true, since the intellectual level of the average businessman is quite low and

the intellectual products that he or she normally purveys to the public--such as Hollywood films, TV programs, paperback novels, and popular music--are hardly on the highly cultural side. Secondly, it should be obvious to any objective--though not to any objectivist--observer that the modern intellectual does not quite think on the same low level as that of an impotent savage."

Since one of my main topics in the course of the debate was the fanatical religiosity--including the ad hominem arguments and the condemning of human beings-- my comment in the preceding paragraph is of course pertinent to the discussion. Nor is it a snide remark to say that the intellectual products that the American businessman normally purveys to the public are hardly on the highly cultural side. The facts show that they usually are not. Branden kept declaiming, in the course of our debate, that I merely made statements, without offering any evidence for them. Apparently when I *did* quote evidence--such as that of Hollywood films, TV programs, paperback novels, and popular music--he was even more discomfited than when I did not!

The irony here is that my discussion of the businesspeople, in the course of the debate, is about Rand's statement that "the businessman has raised men's standards of living--but the intellectual has dropped men's standard of thought to the level of an impotent

savage." If ever there was a snide remark about the intellectual, it is certainly hers! By objectivist standards, apparently, Rand is freely permitted to make all the snide remarks she wants to make; but when these are challenged, and empirical evidence is presented to confute them, the challenger is accused of making a snide remark!

So much for Nathaniel Branden's attitude toward our debate and my conduct in the course of it, I am sorry that he felt the way he did, but I am hardly surprised. Although I disliked the manner in which he handled his part of the debate--for his presentation was replete with sarcasm, puerile arguments, demagoguery, arguments ad hominem, and other unpleasantries that I would prefer not to see in a serious debate before members of an intelligent audience--I appreciated one particular aspect of it. My main intent in having the debate was to demonstrate, to unbiased observers who might be present, that objectivism is a fanatical religious movement rather than a rational, scientific, or empirically based philosophy. And for practically every one of the major points I made to sustain my belief about objectivism's religiosity, the behavior of Branden and his cohorts during the proceedings was remarkably substantiating.

Let me first note in this connection that, although the debate was sponsored jointly by the Albert Ellis Institute, of which I was the founder and executive director at that time, and by Nathaniel Branden

Institute, which Branden founded and directed, about eight hundred of the tickets to the debate were sold by NBI while only about three hundred were sold by my own Institute. The audience, therefore, largely consisted of objectivists and their friends. This was noticeable right from the start for, when Ayn Rand entered the room and sat down, an awed hush fell over most of the people who were gathered. All through the debate the applause for Branden, when he made even minor points, was often deafening; while the applause for me was adequate, but seldom wild.

When I refer below, therefore, to the behavior of the objectivist followers in the audience, I am not speaking of a few score people, but literally of hundreds; and I believe that these objectivists are typical of most other devotees of objectivist courses and Rand-Branden objectivist literature.

The fanatically religious manifestations that took place by Branden and his objectivist followers in the course of the debate included the following:

Extremism and dogmatism. In the course of my initial presentation during the debate, I quoted Ayn Rand's statement that "happiness is possible only to a rational man, the man who desires nothing but rational goals, seeks nothing but rational values and finds his joy in nothing but rational actions." (1961a). Could *anyone* ever

be happy when held to this extreme standard, I asked. And scores of voices from the audience screamed back (somewhat to my surprise): “Yes!!!” In his rebuttal to my presentation, Branden pointed out that I didn’t have to take as long as I had taken to prove that the objectivists are solipsists, since, he said, “We proclaim it proudly.” Solipsism, according to the dictionary, is the theory that the self can be aware of nothing but its own experiences, or the theory that nothing exists or is real but the self. Shortly thereafter, Branden also stated, “We’re extremists, too, on the issue of rationality and consistency.”

Absolutism and need for certainty. Absolutistic ideas of Nathaniel Branden and his followers abounded during the debate. For example:

1. When I opposed the statement of Ayn Rand that “the task of resisting an Atilla can be accomplished only by men of intransigent conviction and moral certainty” (1961b), and pointed out that “It seems to me that the Atilas of the world, or those who use brute force to subdue others who disagree with their views, precisely are men of intransigent conviction and moral certainty,” the objectivists in the audience guffawed derisively.

2. Branden, during his main presentation admitted that, yes, objectivism “advocates reason as an absolute,” and he reaffirmed that

reason means not permitting oneself any form of contradictions, because contradictions cannot exist in reality. How “reasonable!”

3. Branden insisted that if I and many modern philosophers are correct when we claim that man can know nothing *for certain*, this really means that “man can know nothing, period.” If reason, he asked rhetorically (to the delight and wild applause of the objectivist-studded audience) cannot know any facts for certain, then, what in hell are we talking about during the debate? Answer: We were talking about the difference between knowing *something* but not knowing it *for certain*. Simple, but he didn’t see it.

4. When Branden quoted me as saying, in *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* that “on the important issue of free will and determination the rational therapist takes a flexible, somewhat middle of the road position,” his followers roared with laughter at the idea of anyone taking a middle of the road position on any important theory, (1965). Branden himself branded me as being “philosophically inexcusable” for even considering such a position and made a sarcastic comment about my literary style in this regard. Again, there was laughter from his cohorts in the audience.

5. Branden insisted that I must be more religious than he and the objectivists, because I at least entertain the possibility that there

might be some kind of God, while he contends that "it is irrational to entertain even the possibility of a supernatural being."

6. When I stated, during the debate, that I would rather call myself a "logical empiricist" than a "logical positivist," because the word "positivist" itself has absolutistic connotations, the objectivist clique again laughed derisively.

7. Almost every time, in the course of the debate, that I used the term "possibility" or "probability," indicating that in modern scientific disclosure we are absolutely certain of nothing, the objectivists in the audience howled with laughter.

Tautological and definitional thinking. Examples of tautological thinking in the objectivist philosophy were also common during the debate. Witness:

1. I stated, during my initial presentation, that objectivism, "instead of empirically observing that *if* a man likes life he will probably live better by thinking than by non-thinking, devout religiosity states that he *must* want to live and therefore *must* be rational. It makes the highly tautological statement that existence exists, and then implies that this tautology is *evidence* for the conclusions that life is good and death is bad (which are also definitional assumptions)." I was roundly booed for this statement.

2. When I would not admit that reason is all-powerful, Branden demagogically declaimed that it is a man's responsibility, before he sits down to write a book or stands up to give a lecture, to be certain that he knows what he is talking about, that what he alleges to be a fact is a fact, and that his mind is capable of knowing facts. His cohorts cheered this statement wildly--failing completely to see that a man can be certain that he knows what he is talking about only be definition; and failing to see that it is only a cheap debating trick to confuse the statement (a) that a man's mind is capable of knowing facts within the statement, (b) what he alleges to be a fact is indeed a fact.

This debating trick, I have found, is one of the most common used by objectivists across the United States. If you tell them that you do not hold that anything is absolutely certain and that you merely hold that there is a very high degree of probability that some things--such as the sun's rising in the east each day--will occur, they immediately ask, "How can you be certain that there is no certainty?" When you say you can't be certain of that (or anything else), they sneer.

Then they often ask, "Can you be certain that you are talking to me right now?" When you reply that, no, you can't be absolutely

certain--since you could be dreaming--but that the probability is very high that you are talking to them, they sneer again.

They frequently ask, "Do you think that your mind is capable of understanding what we are talking about and comprehending facts?" When you reply that, yes, you are reasonably sure that you are capable of understanding the discussion and of comprehending facts, they triumphantly point out that you must then really believe in certainty, since without such a belief you could not possibly be talking about the problem of certainty and could not possibly comprehend any facts.

Fanatical objectivists fail to see that they are *definitionally* taking your belief that there is a high probability that you understand the discussion, and can comprehend facts and *making it* (in their own certainty-demanding heads,) into the absolutistic propositions that (a) you *must* believe in certainty; that (b) you *have to* know facts to discuss anything whatever; that (c) if your mind is *capable* of knowing facts then it must certainly know them; and that (d) only fanatical objectivists know what the *true* facts are and there is no possible logical or empirical way of disputing their knowledge. This kind of objectivist thinking seems to be exactly like the old Christian notion that if you are capable of discussing the question of God or of how

many angels can sit on the head of a pin, then it is obvious that there *must* be a God and that angels *certainly* exist.

Intolerance of opposition. As I pointed out in Chapter 9 of this book, Rand's fanatical objectivism declines to tolerate opposing views and, like so many other fanatic religions, nastily to annihilate its opponents. Examples of this kind of intolerance continually occurred during my debate with Branden.

1. The moderator of the debate, Lee M. Shulman, introduced Branden and me by stating: "I trust that during this discussion you will show the same respect to the speaker with whom you disagree as you will show toward the speaker with whom you agree." Although I am reasonably sure that any unprejudiced observer hearing the debate would agree that my associates, friends, and followers who were in the audience strictly adhered to the moderator's request, such an observer will probably agree that a large percentage of Branden's cohorts reacted in the opposite way.

I would be delighted to offer evidence on this point by making the tape recording of the debate available to the public. Unfortunately, Branden includes in his post-debate letter to me this statement: "As you know, our written agreement states that neither of us can release tape recordings of the debate for general distribution without the consent of the other. For the reasons given above, I

cannot give my consent. I cannot give your performance the sanction that such consent would imply.

“I will be glad to provide you with a copy of the recording for your own personal use, as agreed on, if you will assure me that the tape will not be played for anyone else, neither for your patients nor students nor colleagues. If you decline to give me such a letter, I will provide you with a tape recording of your part of the debate, but not mine.”

I had no choice, since I wanted a recording of the complete debate in order to prepare this chapter, but to agree to Branden’s terms. So only I (and not even a transcribing secretary) have listened to the recording. After listening to it, I find that I would be delighted to release it for public hearings; but I shall of course stick to my agreement and not do so. As for Branden’s “reasons” for not releasing it, I would suspect--though I am naturally not *certain*--that he was so ashamed of some of the puerile, intolerant interruptions by many of his supporters that he decided it would be poor public relations for the cause of objectivism to release this recording.

It may seem like something of an argument ad hominem for me to say that objectivism preaches intolerance just because so many of its supporters are intolerant. Many of the followers of rational emotive behavior therapy, after all, are not completely sane or rational; but

that hardly proves that REBT is an irrational creed. Was it not Sigmund Freud who said, "God protect me from the Freudians?"

Nonetheless, as I have shown here, the leading objectivist writers, Rand and Branden, do teach intolerance in their books, articles, and speeches. And it was obvious to many neutral observers at the Ellis-Branden debate that most of the objectivists who were present had studied intensively at the NBI courses, had probably been attracted to objectivism because they were highly anti-libertarian, and had learned to be more authoritarian than ever through their objectivist studies.

It was also obvious, on several occasions during the debate, that Branden was deliberately appealing to the intolerance of the objectivist clique and that he was encouraging its hysterical and bigoted behavior. Although I cannot incontrovertibly prove that the intolerance of the objectivists during the debate is intrinsic to the fundamental philosophy of objectivism, I think a very good case can be made for the hypothesis that the two are integrally connected.

2. When I stated, during my initial presentation, that "the objectivist argument for selfishness is taken to such extremes that, if it actually were carried out in human affairs, only a few exceptionally strong and callous individuals would survive, while the rest of us--who often are weak, sick, and in need of succoring--would probably

perish," the objectivists in the audience laughed derisively. I stated later that objectivism posits goals "that are not even desirable: commitment to the maintenance of a *full* intellectual focus, to the *constant* expansion of one's understanding and knowledge, and to *never* permitting oneself contradictions. If any individual were truly as devoted to these goals as the objectivists urge him to be, he would be *compulsively* rational--and therefore inhuman and irrational." Again there were great shouts of laughter--showing how compulsively rational the objectivist audience members were demanding themselves to be and how totally intolerant they were of any other view.

3. After I had given specific reasons for all of my anti-objectivist and pro-rational therapy views in my opening presentation, Branden remarked that he would not frame the formal content of his remarks and not merely state what he had to say; but, he said with great scorn, "I will give you the *reasons* for my statements;" Whereupon his followers wildly applauded his pejorative implication.

4. In disputing my view that people *are* often contradictory and that they have to learn to live with their own and others' contradictions, Branden insisted that contradictions invariably lead to most unfortunate circumstances; for example, he said, they allow one to commit oneself to speak on one subject and then speak on another. This was an invidious reference to the fact that he expected me not to

dwell on objectivism and Ayn Rand during the debate (and presumably to stick to *his* psychological theories), while I had no such intentions, and did otherwise. For which, Branden's voice inflection indicated, I was a louse. Expectably, his clique echoed that I was a louse--in spades!

5. During his main presentation, following mine, Branden stated that certain people, the advocates of rational therapy among them, proclaim, "Down with morality!" Who these certain people may be, I don't know. I have so far met no one who says down with all morality. In any event, I and my associates are not in the least against morality. Like the objectivists, we oppose particular rules that are called moral, but that we consider immoral. But Branden and his cohorts are so certain that their kind of morality is the *only* possible kind that they are intolerant of anyone who has different views of morality, and indiscriminately condemn him as "immoral."

6. When I pointed out, during rebuttal, that the employment of absolute reason and non-contradiction is not essential in human affairs, because "all of us-- Branden and me included--all of us have many contradictory views and we still survive," the fanatical objectivists in the audience interrupted with contemptuous laughter.

7. In attempting to rebut my point that humans can fully accept themselves even when they behave inadequately and

incompetently, Branden insisted that they have a primitive sense of low self-esteem when they act unintelligently or ineptly; and *that*, he stated with emphasis, is what is turned against people when they act in a self-destructive manner. After making this point--which was not a bad one, though I disagree with his implication that therefore people *must* condemn themselves when they behave badly--Branden sarcastically and gratuitously remarked as he turned to me, "Chew on that!" Whereupon his followers burst into enthusiastic applause.

8. Throughout the debate, Branden used a sneering tone and debating tricks that presumably would show what an idiot I was. Thus, when I claimed that clear thinking is not absolutely *necessary* but merely is *desirable* for survival, and when I cited as evidence to support this claim that millions of stupid, disturbed, and unclear-thinking individuals survive until they die of old age, Branden dramatically declaimed, "When you are lying on the table under a surgeon's knife, clear thinking is bloody necessary for your survival!" How irrelevant!

And when I talked about the tyranny of 'the shoulds' to which most disturbed people surrender (as Karen Horney originally pointed out), Branden rhetorically demanded why *should* we accept the fact that two and two make four? In cases like this, where I kept refuting the extremist objectivist claims that *all* or *most* people will die if they

do not consistently think clearly or if they give in to the tyranny of *shoulds*, Branden frantically brought up unusual exceptions to my objections and sneeringly “demolished” me with these illegitimate objections. His followers invariably fell for these pitiful tricks and, with their master, laughed and laughed.

Deification and hero worship. Several examples of arrant deification took place in the course of the debate. From the moment when the hushed awe fell over the objectivists in the audience as Ayn Rand entered the auditorium and was seated in one of the front rows, until the closing moments of the debate, Branden and objectivism were so adulated that almost every neutral observer who later spoke to me about the debate spontaneously remarked that he or she had never seen any occasion which more closely resembled a religious revival meeting. Here are some specific examples of what these observers noticed:

1. Branden interrupted my initial presentation and ran to Ayn Rand’s defense when I showed how unbelievable are the heroes of her novels. Apparently his deification of Ayn Rand caused him to be so shocked by my impious mentions of her that he could not restrain himself until his portion of the debating time arrived, and had to come compulsively to her defense. The reaction of the objectivists in the

audience at this point, both to Rand's horror at being "insulted" and to Branden's gallant (if misplaced) defense, was clearly devotional.

2. When I was introduced by the chairman of the debate, Lee M. Shulman, I received a healthy round of applause, as speakers on such occasions routinely do. When Branden was introduced (in quite a dispassionate manner, because the chairman, though an objectivist, was not playing any favorites that night), there was a wild ovation lasting about half a minute. When Branden opened his talk by saying how regretful he was that I had violated our debating agreement, there were huzzas for him and boos for me--although the audience could not have possibly known what this agreement was, and whether or not I had violated it.

3. In rebuttal to my argument that people could easily survive in our society if they behaved stupidly or failed to perceive reality adequately, Branden declaimed that, if a man's values and goals are in conflict with the facts of reality, he necessarily moves toward self-destruction. "Not," he thundered, "because I say so; not because Ayn Rand says so; but because reality says so!" Since reality does *not* say that people necessarily must destroy themselves if their values and goals are in conflict with its facts (witness the number of politicians, clergymen, astrologers, fortune tellers, and mystics who get along very well in our society and live to ripe old ages), it seems

that the objectivists who wildly cheered Branden were hardly cheering for reality, but because Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden *said* that irrational behavior *has to* lead to self-destruction. It was patently Rand and Branden, and not the dictates of reality that the rabid objectivists were worshipping.

4. Said Branden in the course of the debate: "We admire heroes enormously--and by heroes we mean men of outstanding moral character...and those who have fallen far below the average in that same area we say we despise or feel contempt for... The hero has nothing to fear from our attitude. But *somebody* has!" Here, Branden is saying that (a) heroes do exist and are to be worshipped; (b) only fanatical objectivists truly know who heroes are; (c) people of outstanding moral character are those whom objectivists *accept* as having good moral character; (d) people who do not have good moral character are villains and should be roundly condemned; (e) villains, as objectivists define them, especially non-objectivist rascals like Albert Ellis, had better watch out, lest objectivists' mightiest wrath suddenly descend on them!

As might be expected, this combination of grandiosity about objectivism and violent excoriation of non-objectivists, was greeted by a wild outburst of derisive laughter and applause on the part of the fanatical objectivists in the audience.

5. At the very end of the debate Branden condemned what he referred to as "the entire mainstream of psychology, past and present," and implied that he would not have to do so thirty years from now, since objectivist psychology would have replaced all other psychological systems and the field would no longer be in the benighted state in which it now rests. His supporters ended with wild bravos and applause for his conduct at the debate, although it seemed to be agreed by the non-objectivists who were present that he had done his best to make a mockery of serious and dispassionate argument throughout the debate and that he had played up the worst emotions of the members of the audience while ostensibly making a case for absolute, pure reason.

Unrealism and anti-empiricism. At several points in the debate Branden, stated unrealistic objectivist attitudes--such as the attitudes that people can know nothing without the use of reason, and that they cannot survive without applying it in a high-level manner. However, at times, possibly as a result of my showing how ridiculous many of the objectivist views are, he took somewhat more realistic and moderate attitudes. When I pointed this out, he denied that he was being moderate and insisted that throughout the debate he was continually quoting from his own writings.

By and large, I think he was right about this. For whenever he temporarily seemed to moderate his views--and to deny, for example, that Randian objectivism demands people's infallibility if they are to consider themselves worthwhile--he soon returned to the other side of the fence and negated his previous moderate tone. Thus, he said at one point that although people should strive for moral perfection, their mere determination to understand their problem is the beginning of such perfection; and, he insisted, moral perfection does not mean omniscience or infallibility. But he contradicted this by stating, "I have self-esteem because I know I acted in a manner I know to be rational"--which implies that if he acted in a manner that he knew to be irrational, he would condemn himself and feel low self-esteem.

One of the most unrealistic attitudes that Branden (and Ayn Rand) displayed during the debate was the one I referred to before regarding my quoting objectivist teachings in the words of John Galt and my insisting that Galt (like other Ayn Rand heroes) is inhumane and hence unbelievable. Branden angrily stated that I was quoting Rand's heroes out of context and then offering their views as an official statement of the objectivist philosophy. But Branden and other objectivist writers do exactly the same thing continually.

He also complained that I was not sticking to objectivist psychology. But, in introducing Branden to the audience, Lee M.

Shulman made much of the fact that he was the founder of the Nathaniel Branden Institute, which gives regular courses "on Ayn Rand's philosophy, objectivism." I say again: It is ridiculous to try to separate Branden's objective psychology from Ayn Rand's objectivism and from the interminable mouthings of her fictional heroes. And it is unrealistic to suppose that I would try to debate against Branden's views without vigorously attacking 'the Gospel According to John Galt.'

Condemning and punitive attitudes. As I noted in detail in Chapter 12 of this book, one of the most religious aspects of fanatical objectivism is its theological condemnation of human beings --of their essences or souls--when they have displayed some kind of deplorable behavior. This anti-human and anti-humane attitude was continually evident in the course of the Ellis-Branden debate. For instance:

1. When I showed, in my initial presentation, that the objectivists use arguments ad-hominem against their opponents, and noted that "it is false to label pragmatists and positivists as Attilaists when most of them, like William James and A.J. Ayer, are solidly against war and violence," the devout objectivists in the audience laughed, seeming to indicate that James and Ayer are to be condemned to hell and made to repent their enormous sins of holding non-objectivist views.

2. After I accused the objectivists of being true believers and fanatical religionists, Branden in his rebuttal angrily remarked, "It's a bit thick for the advocate of the power of man's mind to be accused of religiosity or mysticism and the enemy [sic!] to pass himself off as the champion of reason." Whereupon his objectivist followers broke into wild applause for him and catcalls for me--indicating that, with James and Ayer, I, too, should be condemned.

3. Branden brought up the point, during his second rebuttal, that I sometimes teach my clients that even Adolf Hitler, although mistaken and immoral in much of his conduct, is not to be condemned for being the way he was; and that if we were truly sane ourselves, we would try to accept the Hitlers of the world with their errors, would keep them in protective custody until they stopped being antisocial, and would attempt to rehabilitate them, (as Nathan Leopold was rehabilitated while he was in prison,) so that they would not want to be immoral in the future. He insisted that I was wrong about this forgiving and accepting attitude because Hitler would have a great deal to gain by it. When I reiterated my view during the question and answer period, and pointed out that those of us who condemn the Hitlers of the world are being just as antihuman as these Hitlers themselves, and that by our condemning Hitlers we usually lose the possibility of our trying to induce them to change and become less

antisocial, the fanatical objectivists in the audience booed me roundly. Clearly, they were not going to be satisfied with any creed but the ancient one of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Whereupon, reaffirming this view, Nathaniel Branden stated that, when he had said earlier in the debate that people were not to be damned completely for their errors or sins, he was talking about the sort of people who come for psychotherapy, and not about those who are the perpetrators of major existential uncorrectable evils like the murder of millions of people. "I did not wish to leave the implication," he said, "that there are not certain people whom I do not condemn totally, all the way down, and irredeemably... I hold the value of *human* life as an absolute. So of course that's the position I would take toward Adolf Hitler." At this point, his supporters in the audience broke out into perhaps the wildest and most prolonged applause of the entire debate.

Immediately after the debate, I was talking to Lee Shulman. I told him I considered Branden's remark excellent evidence for my thesis that the objectivists were exceptionally bigoted, that they did *not* consider the value of human life as an absolute. (Hitler, obviously, was human, too, and his life should be as absolute as anyone else's.) And I added that they obviously *wanted* excuses (such as the reprehensible behavior of the Nazis) to condemn totally other humans

and to prove that fanatical objectivists were the only "pure" people who "deserved" to keep living. (That was exactly what Hitler believed of Aryans as opposed to non-Aryans!)

Lee apparently repeated my statement to Branden. For in his letter to me three months after the debate, Branden closed with this point: "You remarked after the debate that you were glad to have the proof on public record that I was a 'bigot'--my 'bigotry' consisting, in your view, of my conviction that Hitler was an unqualifiedly contemptible human being. Since I do not want to deprive you of this piece of evidence against me, I am repeating it here, so that you will have it in writing."

I thank Nathaniel Branden for this courtesy. I am happy to have in writing the unequivocal statement from the number two individual in the objectivist camp that Hitler was an unqualifiedly contemptible human being. My position is that Hitler was a human who performed many contemptible deeds and that although his performances may be negatively evaluated--indeed, may probably be evaluated as some of the worst acts ever committed in human history--it is illegitimate, unscientific, and antihuman to evaluate *him* as an "unqualifiedly contemptible" *person*.

Every human, if we would speak accurately, is a "person who does so and so" rather than a "so and so person." Even to call an

individual a "barber" or a "banker" or "an objectivist" is technically wrong; more accurately, he or she is a "person who does barbering," "a person who performs banking services," or "a person who believes in some of the principles of objectivism."

For shorthand purposes, we may legitimately use terms like "barber," "banker," and "objectivist," as long as we realize that these terms do not designate *all* of what a person is. For a "barber" eats, drinks, copulates, goes to the movies, plays with his children, and does a thousand other things besides barbering; and if we think of him or her exclusively, or even primarily, as one who does barbering, we are not seeing what he really is. What is more, if a person is inefficient at barbering and we call him a "poor barber," we have to be careful not to imply that he is also inefficient at eating, drinking, copulating, etc., and not to think that he is a "poor person."

Similarly, although Hitler was a *person who* committed abominable deeds, however, it is unscientific and misleading to call him an abominable person. And just as Hitler himself was bigoted--because he called a person who has non-Aryan heredity a non-Aryan person, and then condemned this whole person because he happened to dislike his non-Aryan background--so Nathaniel Branden is a person with bigoted ideas if he labels Hitler as "an unqualifiedly contemptible human being" instead of a person with some contemptible traits. The

fact that Hitler's crimes included many murders of innocent people does not gainsay the fact that he was a *person who* did wrong things rather than, as Branden implies, a werewolf of a devil.

The main point is that there *are* no humans who are vermin, werewolves, or devils. There are just humans--who, being human, often do the damndest deeds. To accept this fact is to act scientifically, humanely, and not fanatically religious. To refuse to accept it is to be unscientific, inhumane, and devoutly religious. My debate with Nathaniel Branden confirmed that, whatever the followers of Ayn Rand may think they are, and however rational they may pretend to be, they are one of the most irrational, unscientific, puerile, people-condemning, and fanatically religious groups that now exist. To paraphrase the kind of language Branden used during his debate with me: If objectivism, on the basis of the evidence presented abundantly in this book, is not a fanatical religion, I wonder what the hell is!

Chapter 15

Summary and Conclusion

By now, I think that I have brought up to date my 1968 book, *Is Objectivism a Religion?*, and established with much evidence that objectivism, as well as libertarianism and capitalism, are indeed religions. I have examined the main philosophies of Ayn Rand and her

close collaborator, Nathaniel Branden, as well as Alan Greenspan, and have indicated that, until the time of Rand's death in 1982, their views were fascistic, absolutistic, and fanatically religious. I shall now, in this final chapter, summarize Rand's main rigidities and show how Rand embodied absolutism in her own life, and encouraged Branden, Greenspan, and thousands of other devout Randians to do the same.

Let me say once again that, although I have been a firm atheist and anti-mystic since the age of 12, I am not completely opposed to religion, nor think that it is without virtue, nor am I fanatically and completely anti-religious. I believe that no gods or supernatural entities exist nor will exist. As I have noted for years, if I held such absolutistic views about religion, I would be an inflexible dogmatist--as are, of course, many religionists. I figured out a firm but still probabilistic position on religion when I was 12--which I call probabilistic atheism.

As a probabilistic atheist, I hold that it is highly unlikely that we can ever empirically show (a) that absolutely nothing supernatural exists, nor will exist. But according to the usual laws of probability and the observed nature of humans who live in this world, it appears to be *highly probable* that no gods, gnomes, fairies, or angels exist and directly or indirectly control human thoughts, feelings, and actions. They could, of course, exist yesterday, today, or tomorrow.

But since there seems to be no empirical evidence that supernatural entities exist, I shall probabilistically *assume* that they don't.

Consequently, I am not merely an agnostic (who believes that he doesn't really *know* whether there are any supernatural entities, and will probably never know about their existence). I say, "Yes, I do not *know* if Gods or angels exist but I am *probabilistically sure* that they don't." If I (or anyone) later proves that they do exist, I shall accept that. But there is so *little* evidence to support this hypothesis, that I'll still firmly hold that they do *not* exist--nor do fairies, demons, or Santa Claus."

So I quite probabilistically view that there are no gods or angels--and most probably never will be. I also once believed that religion itself was largely harmful to humans, because it has many dangers and limitations (Ellis, 1969). But I later realized that there are many different kinds of religion and that some were partly beneficial, and some were rarely so. I therefore published a paper showing that religiosity rather than religion was dangerous to mental health and happy living, (Ellis, 1983). By religiosity, I meant devout, absolutistic, fanatical religion.

I still mostly hold these beliefs, but have come around to view that, although it is difficult for devout religionists to give themselves unconditional self-acceptance (USA), unconditional other-acceptance

(UOA), and unconditional life-acceptance (ULA)--which are prime goals of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)--they still can do so. Unusual religionists --such as Jesus, Martin Luther King, Martin Buber, and Paul Tillich--have done so; and many others can. Acknowledging this, I have collaborated with a Mormon priest and a Christian psychologist to write a book, *REBT for Religious Persons*. (Mielsen and Ellis, 2000). I am still, however, a probabilistic atheist and would like to see many more open-minded atheists and religionists.

Ayn Rand, unfortunately, was a fanatical, devout, absolutistic atheist. Although she was brilliant, at times individualistic, anti-authoritarian, and supported some humanistic views, her extreme absolutist and fanatical ways in which she upheld them often turned her into a devout religionist. She then helped create more harm than good--as fanatical religionists often (though not always) do.

Many of Rand's absolutistic religious views were integrally integrated with her other one-sided rigidities. I shall now try to define some of the main elements of her fanatical religiosity, show how they were almost constantly apparent in her main philosophies, in her personal life, and the kind of lives she practically prescribed for Nathaniel Branden and other hard-core objectivists. Some of the following material I derived from Jeff Walker's beautifully researched book, *The Cult of Ayn Rand*, which I advise all my readers to rush to

get copies, (1999). Other books that were valuable were Jerome Tuccille's *It Usually Begins With Ayn Rand* (1999), John W. Robbins' *With Charity Toward None: Hard Analysis of Ayn Rand's Philosophy* (1971), and John W. Robbins' *Answer to Ayn Rand*. These are somewhat prejudiced in that they favor libertarianism and Christianity, but they make some good points against Rand. Barbara Branden's *The Person of Ayn Rand* (1983) to some degree whitewashes Rand and overlooks her failings; and so does Nathaniel Branden's *Judgement Day*. But they also give first-hand accounts of some of Rand's personal problems and make valuable observations of Rand as a woman.

All the above books were published after the first version of this book, entitled, *Is Objectivism a Religion?* Although they barely mention me, they fascinatingly confirm many of my views of Ayn Rand's philosophy and personhood.

On to Rand's fanatical religiosity, which I shall now describe under several major overlapping headings.

Rand's rigid absolutism. The Illustrated Oxford Dictionary defines *absolutism* as "the acceptance of or belief in absolute principles in political, philosophical, ethical, or religious matters." *Absolute* is defined as "1. complete; utter; 2. unconditional; unlimited; 3. ruling

arbitrarily or with unrestricted power; 4. universally valid; *not* relative or comparative.” That was Ayn Rand to a T! Witness:

“Rand presented her thought to the world as rigorously worked out by relentless logic from indisputable premises,” (Walker, 1999).

“Ayn Rand originated an objectivist tradition of proudly refusing to read books and articles she knew to be evil,” (B. Branden, 1986).

“The absolutism of reason with its corollary, *the rejection of faith*, was, and remained, the philosophic issue most important to Ayn” She adds, “In Ayn Rand’s presence, one felt the command to function at one’s best, to be the utmost that one could be.” (B. Branden, 1986).

To Ayn Rand, “objectivism is an inflexible package deal,” (Tuccille, 1999).

“Ayn Rand’s division of the world into white of good and black of bad, with no shades of gray in between them was not lessening...but increasing,” (B. Branden, 1986).

Rand adds, “There is only one reality and therefore one truth;” (O’Neill, 1977). “All reason is ultimately based on the crucible of self-evident truth.” (O’Neill, 1977).

“Branden’s only proof for his contention that the absolute knowability of reality is his own absolute infallibility as a source of knowledge,” (O’Neill, 1977).

According to Rand, the Right of Liberty, Right of Life, and Right to Pursue Happiness“ are inalienable, in the sense that they are totally unconditional;” (O’Neill, 1977).

Rage and Damnation against those who disagree with Randians.
Oxford Dictionary: *Damnation*. Eternal punishment in hell. Cursing. Fanatically religious people are very likely to completely excoriate the dissenting views of other people but also to damn the *people* themselves--wholly and completely. They condemn dissenters to eternal punishment and, if they believe in hell--which they frequently do--condemn them to eternal punishment in hell.

Rand, of course, did not believe in any afterlife or hell. But she killed anti-objectivists and “false” capitalists in her novels, and her rage and damnation against personal and theoretical objectors to objectivism were sometimes unbelievable. Here are some examples:

Barbara Branden: “Regrettably, Nathaniel’s anger against Ayn and his former friends appears not to have diminished but rather to have escalated during the years since 1968,” (1986).

George Berger, a lawyer in Louis Nizer’s office, when asked if Nathaniel and Barbara Branden should bother to sue Ayn Rand for libel: “Hell hath no fury!” (B. Branden, 1986).

Nathaniel Branden said, “Rand gave her unconditional acceptance to no one;” and also stated that “[Ayn] was impatient,

irritable, quick to condemn--Frank, me, Barbara, Leonard, and anyone," (N. Branden, 1984).

Ayn Rand to Nathaniel Branden after their breakup: "You'll have nothing! I'll stop the publication of *The Psychology of Self-Esteem!*" (N. Branden, 1989).

Allen Blumenthal, the main objectivist psychiatrist, described Rand's "contempt for people with psychological problems" (Walker, 1999).

Leonard Peikoff damned Barbara Branden and thought she had invented Rand's affair with Branden. (Walker, 1999).

Leonard Peikoff excommunicated Alan Greenspan from objectivism. (Walker, 1999).

"*Damned or damnation* appears in *Atlas Shrugged* 211 times." (Walker, 1999).

"Ayn Rand was enraged against her sister, Nora, when Nora raved about Solzhenitsyn's writings." (B. Branden, 1986).

Ayn Rand in regard to her main objectivist friends: "I did not see that a great explosive rage was building within each one of them," (N. Branden, 1989).

Nathaniel Branden: "To destroy me, Barbara later told me, had become Ayn's obsession. Barbara was stunned by Ayn's vindictiveness" (N. Branden, 1989).

Barbara Branden to Nathaniel Branden: "You've got to understand that *Ayn wants you dead!*" (N. Branden, 1989).

"Thugs, hoodlums, savages, and degenerates--those who question the teachings of Ayn Rand and Nathan Ben Rand," (Walker, 1999).

Ayn Rand dealt with dissenters at her lectures "as if Atilla the Hun had just got up," (Walker, 1999).

"According to Nathaniel Branden's later recollection: being friendly with anyone critical of Rand...would generate her instant denunciation," (Walker, 1999).

Phil and Kay Nolte Smith, when excommunicated objectivist's approved writers were later excluded from the *Ayn Rand Lexicon*: "These are Papal Bulls that are coming out. It's like the Holy Roman Church," (Walker, 36).

Jerome Tuccille and I, who wrote books against Ayn Rand, "received death threats by one of Rand's rabid supporters," (Walker, 1999).

Nathaniel Branden: "I don't know of anyone other than Church fathers in the Dark Ages who used the word 'evil' so often as Ayn Rand," (1989).

Rand's and objectivism's cultism. All religions are by no means cults, but fanatical religions, such as Ayn Rand's objectivism,

frequently are. *Cult*, according to the Oxford Illustrated Dictionary is:
1. A system of religious worship especially as expressed in ritual. 2.
a devotion to a person or thing (the cult of aestheticism). *Ritual* is
defined as 1. a prescribed order of performing rites. 2. a procedure
regularly followed.

Randism follows these definitions in many ways, as shown in
detail in Jeff Walker's *The Ayn Rand Cult*. Once again: read this book!
Evidence for considering fanatical Randism a cult includes:

Nathaniel Branden: "We were not a cult in the literal sense of the
word, but certainly there was a cultish aspect to our world," (N.
Branden, 1989).

"Litigiousness is a characteristic of most cults, as it was for Rand
personally and for the Nathaniel Branden Institute," (Walker, 1999).

"Objectivists were only supposed to go with objectivists,"
(Walker, 1999).

According to Jeff Walker, Eric Holzer and Kay Nolte Smith,
former members of Rand's collective "both told me that they
considered Rand's movement indisputably a cult" (1999).

Jeff Walker compared Randism to other cults, such as devout
followers of Erhard Seminars Training, followers of Rajneesh, and
Scientologists (1999). He points out that Nathaniel Branden Institute
students later went into these cults.

Heroism in Randianism. Almost all fanatical religionists adopt the head of their cult as an unmitigated, flawless hero and, (as shown above,) vilify the serious opponents of their religion. The Oxford Dictionary definition of *hero* is: 1. a person noted or admired for nobility, courage, outstanding achievements, etc. 2. the chief male character in a person, play, story, etc. 3. Greek Antiquity: a man of superhuman quality, favored by the gods; a demigod.

Right on! For Rand and her fanatic followers here is some confirmatory evidence:

Kay Nolte Smith: "No one was allowed to say anything but praise for her (Ayn Rand's) world for the rest of her life," (Walker, 1999).

Leonard Peikoff: With Ayn Rand, "I experienced total awe, as though I was on a different planet," (Walker, 1999).

Of Ayn Rand: "Her worship of Man is conscious; her language imitates that of the Bible," (Walker, 1999).

Nathaniel Branden: When told by Ayn Rand "you're pro-Reason, pro-Man, and pro-life, I felt as if I had been knighted," (1986).

Nathaniel Branden: "The idea of the greatest literary masterpiece [*Atlas Shrugged*] being dedicated to me is almost more than I can hold in my brain. I'm thrilled, I'm honored, I'm overwhelmed," (1989).

Nathaniel Branden "worshipped Rand as a sorceress of reason" (Walker, 1999).

Barbara Branden: "Ayn Rand began life with a single passionate goal--to create her ideal world and her ideal man," (1986).

Nathaniel Branden: "Between the ages of 14 and 18, I read and reread *The Fountainhead* almost continuously in the dedication and passion of the student of the Talmud," (1986). He added, "With Ayn Rand, I belonged in the company of giants," (1986).

The fanatical personality and disturbances of Ayn Rand and her followers. As a psychologist, I am naturally prejudiced, but I believe, (in view of much confirmatory evidence,) that practically all originators of a fanatical religion and many of their devout followers suffer from severe personality disturbances and/or outright mental illness. Here are some Oxford Dictionary definitions:

Disturbed: Emotionally or mentally unstable or abnormal.
Mental illness: A disorder of the mind. *Fanatic:* A person filled with excessive and often misguided enthusiasm for something. *Passion:* Strong, barely controllable emotion. *Passionate:* Dominated or easily moved to strong feeling, especially love or anger. *Neurosis:* A mental illness characterized by irrational or dogmatic thought or behavior.

Evidence for the fanatic personality and disturbance of Ayn Rand and many of her devout followers includes:

Nathaniel Branden: "I wondered why Barbara (Branden's) first cousin was so frighteningly unhappy, and what would become of him. His name was Leonard Peikoff;" (N. Branden, 1989).

Nathaniel Branden: "Leonard (Peikoff's) projections were so extravagantly wild that they bordered on hysteria," (N. Branden, 1989).

Nathaniel Branden: "Ayn could not bear to be out of control...By the fall of 1958 it was apparent to all of us that Ayn was into a deep and tenacious depression." (1989).

Ayn Rand to Nathaniel Branden: "I would *die* without you in my life" (N. Branden, 1989).

Ayn Rand: "My life is over. He (Nathaniel Branden) took away this earth," (N. Branden, 1989).

Allen Blumenthal wrote, "To express the view that for some time he and Joan (Blumenthal) had been troubled by Ayn's near-paranoia, violent temper, and general bluntness to any content but her own," (N. Branden, 1989).

Nathaniel Branden: "Leonard Peikoff will last because he has no identity apart from his relationship to Ayn Rand," (N. Branden, 1989).

Leonard Peikoff: "I urge you to read *The Ominous Parallels* by Leonard Peikoff...A brilliant book," (Walker, 1999).

Of Ayn Rand: "In her later years, she became incapable of self-criticism," (Walker, 1999).

"Rand suffered from prolonged bouts of depression," (Walker, 1999).

Barbara Branden: Nathaniel Branden and Ayn Rand "were alike in their lack of empathy with the suffering of others," (Walker, 1999).

Barbara Branden: "We (Ayn Rand and I) were ecstasy addicts," (Walker, 1999).

Joan Blumenthal: "You *could not* suggest to Ayn that anything was non-rational in her; that was impossible," (Walker, 1999).

If you wanted to be truly close to Rand, "enormous enthusiasm was expected for every deed and utterance," (Walker, 1999).

As Jeff Walker said, "The psychiatric syndrome of folie à deux barely exaggerates the Rand-Branden interlock...Branden's love affair with himself continues," (Walker, 1999).

Roy Childs: "Ayn Rand took Dexedrine for 40 years." (Walker, 1999).

"Ayn Rand was a woman with a powerful need to control," (B. Branden, 1986). She "had a phobia that water was clean only if you let it run for a long time," (B. Branden, 1986).

Branden adds: Seeing the reviews of her play, *The Unconquered*, "Ayn Rand stayed in bed all day, crying," (1986).

Walter Block of Rand and the Randians: "White wing crazies are crazier than left-wing crazies," (Walker, 1999).

Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden's fanatical espousal of 100% selfishness: Although altruism is generally considered in our culture a virtue, and selfishness something of an evil, practically all people are born somewhat self-interested and also somewhat altruistic--as much sociological, anthropological, and psychological research has indicated. Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden courageously favored the virtues of selfishness and disfavored some of the limitations of altruism--as did a few writers before Rand. But not so fanatically! As usual, Rand took her views on selfishness, which made a little sense, to senseless extremes. She contradictorily held that no real altruistic acts exist--and that if you even slightly gave into them, you (and humanity!) were on the road to death and destruction. As ever, it was the extremism of her views that turned them into excellent nonsense.

Let me start again with Oxford Illustrated Dictionary definitions. *Selfish*: Concerned chiefly with one's own personal profit or pleasure; activated by self-interest. *Altruism*: Regard for others as a principle of action. 2. Unselfishness; concern for other people. *Self-sacrifice*: The negation of one's own interests, wishes, etc. in favor of those of others.

Since practically all of us choose to live (when we are adults) in social groups, because doing so gives us a much fuller and more pleasant life, a good case can be made for (a) saving ourselves *and* (b) saving the group in which we live. As Alfred Korzybski again would say, both/and, not either/or. Sensible proponents of selfishness--like David Seaborg, who favored it in the 1930's, take it easy and avoid the extreme self-sacrifice *and* extreme self-interest. Not Ayn Rand! She and Branden favor unalloyed self-seeking--in line with their *ideal* capitalist leanings. They, and objectivists who devoutly follow them, make selfishness into a devout religion by advocating it--as fanatical religionists often do--*at all costs*. Thus, Jeff Walker states: Rand changed the definition of altruism to imply a complete abandonment of one's own interest and premature death, (Walker, 1999).

Ayn Rand: "One puts oneself above all and crushes everything in one's way to get the business for oneself. Fine!" (Walker, 1999).

William O'Neill: Ayn Rand's "altruism is fundamentally evil because it is a perversion of man's essential (psychological) nature as man," (O'Neill, 1977).

Jerome Tuccille: Ayn Rand "was certainly the first to elevate selfishness to a philosophical absolute," (Tuccille, 1999).

Ayn Rand's Utopianism and perfectionism. Most of us sometimes dream up utopian and perfectionist ideals--and hope that they

someday be realized. Good!--that gives us hope for perfectibility and for the future of humanity. But some of us insist that utopia *absolutely must* be achieved--even though sociologists have for many years shown that, since all social groups change, a changeless utopia cannot very well exist. (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 1999; Brow, 1986). At least not for long.

Rand insists that her "free capitalism" and "absolute individualism" *will* exist if we all enthusiastically follow her views. Not unrealistic and anti-biological--it *is* "natural." We have an inalienable *right* to "free capitalism," therefore it will inevitably come about. When? Well, presumably soon. Note the similarity to the predictions of the coming of the Christ or Messiah in many religions.

To investigate these Randian ideals, let us look at the Oxford Illustrated Dictionary again. *Utopia*: an imagined perfect place or state of things. *Perfect*: 1. complete, not deficient; 2. faultless. *Perfectionism*: the uncompromising pursuit of excellence; 2. the belief that religion or moral perfection is attainable. *Unreal*: 1. not real; 2. imaginary, illusory. Here are some aspects of Rand's and Branden's utopianism, perfectionism, and unrealism:

Jeff Walker writes, Rand had "fictional heroes and ideal humans," (1999).

“Nathaniel Branden: Devout objectivists lived in the world of Ayn Rand’s novels. We sure as heck didn’t exist in the real world,” (Walker, 1999).

Barbara Branden: Rand was often told that her characters were too romantic and extravagant. “Real people don’t behave that way,” (B. Branden, 1986).

Nathaniel Branden: “I was committed to [the Randian] idea that ‘unbreached rationality’ was not merely a powerful guiding principle, but a practice within *anyone’s* power to attain *all of the time*,” (1989).

“There was a strain of Manichaeism in her [Rand’s] outlook--the tendency to see good and evil as essentially separate and opposed principles,” (N. Branden, 1999).

“Ayn Rand is the first writer to project a hero who is a hero *all of the time*,” (N. Branden, 1989).

Rand’s espousal of extreme individualism and capitalism: In line with her other fanatical and utopian views, Rand advocates extreme individualism along with ‘free capitalism’ and thereby takes some sensible philosophies and practices to a ridiculous degree. Like many others who espouse liberty--including the founding fathers of our nation--she often makes an excellent case for more capitalism and individualism and against tyranny, despotism, and statism. She shows that our form of capitalism is in many respects superior to sovietism,

collectivism, and fascism--and perhaps one of the best politico-economic systems that have ever been devised. But she soon goes out of her head and, with fanatical religiosity, espouses a form of "ideal" and "free" capitalism that (she acknowledges) never existed and (I say) probably never will. Why? Because it seems to be anti-social, anti-human, and utopian.

First, some dictionary definitions. *Individualism*: 1. the habit or principle of being independent and self-reliant; 2. social theory favoring the free action of individuals; 3. self-centered theory or conduct. *Capitalism*: an economic system in which the production and distribution of goods depend on invested private capital and profit-making. *Statism*: central government administration and control of social and economic affairs. *Collectivism*: the theory and practice of the collective ownership of land and the means of production.

As I have noted before, in her sometimes sensible advocacy of individualism and capitalism, Rand refuses to acknowledge that we humans are decidedly social *and* individual animals, and all our politico-economic systems have acknowledged and partly fulfilled this inescapable fact. Rand's ideals of pure individualism and capitalism--which she continually, and disappointingly, says have never ever existed. The strongest slavery economies have included much private property--e.g., the slaves--and large privately-owned estates. The

freest capitalist economies--like early American and English capitalism--have many statist and monopolist restrictions. Both/and and never either/or. Nonetheless Rand went fanatically and frantically on:

John Hospers: Rand's devout followers "became scared disciples who dared not say anything wrong," (Walker, 1999).

Jeff Walker: Rand's "I'm right and everyone else is wrong tends to *make* slavish dogmatists out of the audience," (Walker, 1999).

Nathaniel Branden: "Rand went on to say that pure laissez-faire of the kind she advocates had never ever existed."

Ayn Rand: "Capitalism is the only moral system," (N. Branden, 1989).

J.W. Robbins: "Our capitalism and Soviet (and other) collectivism were in many ways similar." (J. Robbins, 1973).

Jeff Walker: Rand's group of devout objectivists for many years ironically referred to themselves as 'The Collective.' Instead of being individuals who thought for themselves, they were a cult who fought outsiders and put their own members on trial when they became dissenters from The Collective, (1999).

Ayn Rand: "Communism meant living for the state." It had no individualism, (B. Branden, 1986.)

J.W. Robbins: "For all of [Rand's] talk of independence, she had a deep need for someone always to be there for her," (1973).

Jeff Walker: "And to slavishly agree with her," (1999).

Jerome Tuccille: Rand saw the individual as "a zero, a pygmy, and a cipher in the capitalist state. But also in her own Collective," (1999).

Rand's and her devout objectivist followers' lack of self-acceptance and other acceptance. Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) follows and actively teaches the philosophies of unconditional self-acceptance (USA) and unconditional other-acceptance (UOA). This is essentially similar to the ideas and practice of Jesus, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Buber, Alfred Adler, and Paul Tillich. Ayn Rand, Nathaniel Branden, and other fanatical objectivists were as far from these attitudes as one can possibly be. In fact, they were usually abysmally damning of non-objectivists and underlyingly damning of themselves.

Dictionary definitions: *Self-deprecation*: the act of disparaging or belittling oneself. *Self-esteem*: 1. a good opinion of oneself; self-confidence. 2. an unduly high regard for oneself, conceit.

As I have noted, Rand and her objectivists are famous for their denunciation and damnation of its "criminal" offenders. They practice the opposite of REBT's (and several other group's) unconditional other-acceptance (UOA)--i.e., you solidly disagree with your dissenter's views and practices, but always--yes, just about always--accept them

as *persons* with whom you sometimes strongly disagree. Rand and her staunch objectivist supporters signally fail to do this. They are allergic to forgiveness and rigidly believe that people *are* their performances--as Alfred Korzybski pointed out they both are *not*. Whatever their present thoughts, feelings, and actions they always have a partly unknown future.

Rational emotive behavior therapy therefore holds that you can always choose--providing that you are not completely brain-injured--to accept other people with their "bad" behavior; and, similarly, choose to unconditionally accept yourself, as a person (USA), in spite of your "wrong" and low-level functioning. Yes, no matter what are other people's and your own "sins."

Here are just a few illustrations of the devout Randian's allergy to UOA and USA:

Journalist, Edith Efron: Rand, Nathaniel Branden, and objectivism were "destroyers of self-esteem that left a trail of emotional cripples" (Walker, 1999).

Nathaniel Branden on this topic: One can only accept oneself and have self-esteem with "an *unbreached* determination to use one's mind to the *fullest* extent of one's ability." (Walker, 1999).

Murray Rothbard: Nathaniel Branden is still "the same victim of his own excessive self-esteem," (Walker, 1999).

Barbara Branden adds, "The concept of unconditional love was totally foreign to Ayn's thinking," (1986).

Nathaniel Branden: Rand gave her unconditional acceptance to no one (N. Branden, 1989).

Ayn Rand: "When I thought of the lies and deceptions to which I was not committed, I felt self-hatred," (N. Branden, 1986).

Nathaniel Branden: "By the fall of 1964, the weight of my self-reproach was being excruciating, like a great rock crushing self-respect out of my body," (1989).

Ayn Rand's deification of reason. Real atheism, which Rand solidly kept claiming she had, of course deifies nothing. But she constantly deified heroes, fanatical supporters of objectivism, and even absolute reason itself.

Here are some dictionary definitions: *Deify*: 1. Make a god of; regard or worship as a god. *Atheism*: The theory or belief that God does not exist. *Worship*: 1. Homage or reverence paid to a deity. 2. The acts, rites, or ceremonies of worship. 3. Regard with adoration. 4. Attend public worship. 5. Be full of adoration.

Rand's and objectivism's deification of reason and of rigid objectivist thinking and thinkers included. Ayn Rand: "The head has reasons which the heart must learn to know," (Walker, 1999).

John W. Robbins: Ayn Rand maintained "that her philosophies and hers alone are based on reason," (Robbins, 1974).

Barbara Branden: Rand stubbornly refused to engage in any arguments about the validity of reason. She held "reason as an absolute, not open to question," (1986).

Nathaniel Branden about Ayn Rand: "The most important issue, the most fundamental, is...the premise that knowledge is based on logic," (1989).

Rand's definitional and tautological thinking. As I've shown, Rand's philosophy is not really based on empirical observation and experimentation but on definitional or tautological thinking. *Because* it is definitional, tautological thinking cannot be verified or falsified; and, as Karl Popper has shown, empirically-based hypotheses can at least be significantly falsified, so are favored by science. Tautological thinking--such as "A cannot be not-A" and "two plus two equal four"--is "true" because you define them in terms of other "truths."

Thus, the dictionary says: *Tautology*: The saying of the same thing twice in different words. *Faith*: 1. Showing faith. 2. A firm belief. 3. A religious belief. Spiritual apprehension of divine truth apart from truth.

Tautological thinking has some practical value (as in mathematics) but is essentially religious, since it is faith unfounded on fact. It is circular thinking with no factual referent.

Some instances of Rand's, Nathaniel Branden's, and other devout objectivists' tautological thinking are these:

J. O'Connor: Rand *defines* human rights--such as property rights and ethical rights--as inalienably *rights*, but gives no evidence for this. If a man is "right" for acting on his "own free judgment, is he not violating his own right by allowing his judgment to become non-free? If it is 'right' for him to use his mind, is it not wrong and therefore a violation of his 'rights' for him to live on a subhuman level? If one is inclined to object that these questions make nonsense of Rand's theory of 'rights,' I can only reply that, if they do, it is only because the concept 'right' as developed by Ayn Rand is nonsensical," (O'Connor, 1974).

Branden says he cannot recall anybody openly questioning Rand's policy [at the Nathaniel Branden Institute], not even once, (J. Walker, 1999).

"There is only one reality and therefore one truth." O'Neill quotes Rand, "All reason is based on the crucible of self-evident truth," (1977).

Barbara Branden: "In all her writing, Ayn was to agree that evil, by its nature, is impotent, that only good--the rational--can ultimately triumph." (1986).

Ayn Rand's ritualistic religiosity. Like most fanatical religionists, Rand and her devout objectivist followers resorted to ritualistic expressions of her dogma. This kind of ritualism often makes the religionist *strongly* believe in her own sacred tenets, and helps her to *emotionally* hold to them. Following rituals is also a behavioral method of getting and keeping attached to absolutistic beliefs.

Some dictionary distinctions: *Ritual*: a prescribed order of performing rites. *Sacred*: 1. exclusively dedicated or appropriated (to a god or to some religious purpose). Made holy by religious association. 2. safeguarded or required by religion, reverence, or tradition. Sacrosanct. 3. embodying the laws or doctrines of a religion. *Scripture*: Sacred writings.

Aspects of ritualism and sacredness frequently followed by Rand and her fanatical followers include:

Jerome Tuccille: Rand "developed her own form of religious-substitute which negated every principle she had established" (Tuccille, 1999).

Dora Jane Hamblin: The objectivist taped seminar in Detroit was “almost liturgical...featuring an immaculate white-clothed altar with a tape-recorded tabernacle,” (Walker, 1999).

“Just as Christian fundamentalists are exhorted to read the Bible every day, students of objectivism are expected to keep reading *Atlas Shrugged* for the rest of their lives.” (Walker, 1999).

Sid Greenberg: Nathaniel Branden Institute lectures “had an atmosphere peculiar to choral masses,” (Walker, 1999).

William O’Neill: *Atlas Shrugged* assumes the proportion of sacred writing in her subsequent writings,” (1977).

J.W. Robbins: Objectivism “has a very definite theology, despite its formal choice of atheism,” (O’Neill, 1977).

Ayn Rand in *Anthem*: “Now I see the face of God, and I raise this God over earth... This god, this one word, ‘I’” (Robbins, 1974).

Jerome Tuccille: “The dollar sign is revered by the Randian with the same fervor Christians reserve for the cross and the Middle Americans for Old Glory.” (Tuccille, 1999).

Rand’s religious-political views. Many political philosophies-- including those in the American Constitution and Bill of Rights--are partly arbitrary and religious in that they sanely state or imply that *it would be better* if life, liberty, and happiness existed; and then they

also imply that since these "rights" are preferable, we humans have an inalienable "right" to have them and it is "unnatural" if we don't.

Hogwash! No matter how good a "right" is, it doesn't *naturally* exist by itself, for all people, all of the time. We can't even prove that a "good" right--like the right to life--is *always* good. Sometimes, when people are in great pain or are restricted from practically all pleasures, their "right to life" is hardly wonderful. Their *choice* of whether they should accept this "right" may still be valuable. But their life *itself*?

Being an absolutist, Rand *makes* several human rights--*not* including your right to disagree with her!--inalienable, unquestionable, and immanent; which, of course, they aren't. She doesn't merely declaim that it is *best* for us to have them; she pig-headedly insists that we *absolutely must*.

Here are some dictionary definitions that may be helpful:

Inalienable: or Inalterable Right: A right that cannot be changed.

Immanent Rights: indwelling and inherent right. *Natural right:* A right indwelling or caused by nature. *Absolute Right:* Unconditional, unlimited right; universally valid right.

Rand's extreme and unfalsifiable views of what is "right" politically, ethically, and economically include these fanatical philosophies and practices:

J.W. Robbins adds, Rand's "objectivism leads logically to anarchy, because if the individual is sovereign, he may not properly be forced to 'delegate' his rights to the state or government" (Robbins, 1974). Contradictorily, however, Rand states "Anarchism is the most irrational, anti-intellectual notion ever spun by the concrete-bound, context-dropping, whine-worshipping fringe of the collectivist movement, where it properly belongs," (*The Objectivist*, 1971). He continues, Rand's "doctrine of human rights has never received a logical philosophical foundation" (Robbins, 1974). Nor, I may add, as I show elsewhere in this book, empirical foundation!

Rand states, "Rights are conditions of existence required by man's nature for his proper survival. If man is to live on earth, it is *right* for him to use his mind, it is *right* to act on his own free judgment, it is *right* for him to work for his values and to keep the product of his work" (Rand, *Capitalism the Unknown Ideal*, 1966).

Nathaniel Branden: "From the objectivist point of view, any sort of collectivism is about to eventuate in statism and the establishment of government tyranny," (O'Neill, 1977). As Swedish and several other collectivist states have not eventuated!

Ayn Rand: "The fact that a living entity *is* determines what it *ought* to do," (Rand, 1964).

Nathaniel Branden: Ayn Rand had "a sacred sense of mission about one's life," (N. Branden, 1989).

Nathaniel Branden: Rand "believed that her most important task, as a novelist, was the development of an all-encompassing 'rational morality';" (1989).

Ayn Rand's and fanatical objectivists' lack of a sense of humor. Although "normal" religionists frequently have a sense of humor and do not take things *too* seriously, fanatical religionists, almost by definition, take a one-sided, all-too-serious view of vital issues. As might be expected, Rand and her devout followers were often humorless--which is probably why Jerome Tuccille (1999), who has a great sense of humor, opposed Rand and objectivism. Read him and see!

Dictionary definition: *Humor*: the condition of being amusing or comical. *Humorous*: Showing humor or a sense of humor.

Examples of Rand's and her devout followers lacking a sense of humor follow:

Jerome Tuccille: "Humor in the objectivist handbook was considered immoral and anti-life," (Tuccille, 1999).

J.W. Robbins: Objectivists must not belittle objectivism with "humor" (Robbins, 1974).

Barbara Branden: "Ayn had very little humor in her psychological makeup, and was suspicious of humor on principle. She roundly criticized the view that a sense of humor is an important human trait, and projected an especially withering contempt at the suggestion that one should be able to laugh at oneself." (1986).

Rand's sexual Puritanism and unrealistic philosophy about love. Not all religions, of course, are puritanical, but many fundamentalist and fanatical ones are. Although in some ways Ayn Rand was highly unconventional sexually--especially in having an affair with Nathaniel Branden from 1955 to 1968, and insisting that her husband, Frank, and Branden's wife, Barbara, know about it and give it their full sanction. She also had some quite unrealistic views of love in her novels and in her life.

Dictionary definitions: *Puritan*: a person practicing or affecting extreme strictness in religion or morals." Some extreme sex and love views of Rand and her rabid followers include:

Jeff Walker: "Rand has always been devoted to the depravity of sex without love," (Walker, 1999).

Roy Childs: "Objectivists would force themselves into relationships based on their shared values" even when they had no physical attraction for their mates, (Walker, 1999).

Barbara Branden: "Nathaniel did not tell Ayn of his affair with Patricia [Gullison] though it continued for a year (B. Branden, 1986).

Jerome Tuccille: "The final straw was the objectivist theory of sex, a form of atheistic Puritanism as severe as that of the most dogmatic theist," (1999).

Jeff Walker: Randians were not allowed to have lovers who were non-atheists. "If one's lover adheres to even the vaguest notion of a Creator: goodbye lover," (Walker, 1999).

Mary Gaitskill: "A lot of guys felt after reading Rand that they had to slap their girls around in order to have correct sex," (Walker, 1999).

Jeff Walker: Nathaniel Branden changed his seat in the restaurant "if any evidently gay man sat down at the next table," (Walker, 1999); Rigid, uncompromising, unrealistic, utopian, and worshipful.

The harmfulness of Randian psychotherapy. Ayn Rand did not undergo any formal psychotherapy, although from reports of those who knew her well, she was a severe depressive and was prone to outbursts of intense rage. She supposedly never needed psychological help, since she used the "unbreached power of her mind" and therefore could not have been irrational. But Nathaniel Branden, with an M.A. in psychology and licensed as a marriage and family therapist

in California, along with Allen Blumenthal, a psychiatrist, and several other professional therapists, treated many objectivists who the objectivist movement favored and referred to them.

As you would expect, Branden, Blumenthal, and other dyed-in-the-wool objectivists religiously did Randian-type therapy, and they and Rand quickly got rid of objectivists who did any other kind. At first, they accepted REBT when they mistakenly thought it was like Randian treatment; but when they discovered, in my 1968 debate with Branden, that in many ways it significantly differed from objectivist tenets, that was that!

Dictionary definition: *Psychotherapy*: the treatment of mental disorder by psychological means. Over the years, I've seen a good many ex-clients of objectivist therapy and found that it helped the majority of them feel more worthless and hopeless than they were when they started it.

Examples of some of the absolutism of Randian therapists and some of the harm they created in their practice include these:

Jeff Walker: "Rand endorsed Nathaniel Branden as official therapist to everyone in the Collective," (Walker, 1999).

Nathaniel Branden "advises every therapist to become a hypnotist skilled in age regression," (Walker, 1999). Actually, a

number of experiments have shown that most experiences “recalled” under age regression are faked.

Jeff Walker: “It was Nathaniel Branden who drafted, founded, and built the therapeutic cult of objectivism, (Walker, 1999).

Psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinical social workers are judged to be unethical if they socialize with their clients or have non-professional relationships with them. But according to Barbara Branden, objectivist therapists--especially Nathaniel Branden and Allen Blumenthal--were intimate with their former and current clients. (B. Branden, 1986).

Joan Blumenthal: “Objectivism drove *everyone* to need psychotherapy,” (Walker, 1999).

I could go on and on, endlessly showing that Ayn Rand and her philosophy of objectivism had many faults and contradictions and led her and her devout followers to harm themselves and many others. However, I mainly wrote the original edition of this book to show that the theory and practice of objectivism, contrary to Rand’s professed atheism and reality-seeking, is stated in such a one-sided, fanatical way as to be deeply religious.

Thus, if you review Rand’s positions and practices described in this book, you can see that many of them are not only religious but fanatically so. Here are some definitions from the Illustrated Oxford

Dictionary: *Religion*: 1. the belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship. 2. the expression of this in worship. 3. a particular form of faith and worship. 4. a thing one is devoted to. *Devout*: earnestly religious. *Fanatic*: a person filled with excessive and often misguided enthusiasm for something. *Extremist*: a person who holds extreme or fanatical political or religious views.

Let me not take my own views on Rand and her philosophy to fanatical extremes! I think that she was an originally creative and brilliant thinker, that her main goals were to enhance human life and happiness, and that she made some excellent points to try to aid these goals. She especially opted for individualism and against coercion. But she presented her views in an absolutistic, fanatical, unrealistic manner that contradicted and helped sabotage many of them.

To sum up the main evidence in this book, Ayn Rand and her solid followers were intensely religious. Her philosophy was very often stated in absolutist, adoring, bigoted, devout, dogmatic, fanatical, fascistic, uncompromising, unrealistic, utopian, and worshipful tenants. If I am accurate about this, doesn't it (in all probability but not certainly) show that Ayn Rand had a deeply religious personality and philosophy?

My case rests.

Appendix

Quotes by Alan Greenspan:

"I guess I should warn you, if I turn out to be particularly clear, you've probably misunderstood what I've said," Alan Greenspan stated.

"In the absence of the gold standard, there is no way to protect savings from confiscation through inflation. There is no safe store of value."

"An almost hysterical antagonism toward the gold standard is one issue which unites statist of all persuasions. They seem to sense... that gold and economic freedom are inseparable."

Articles about Alan Greenspan and Ayn Rand:

Excerpts from **"Deep Cover"**

by R.W. Bradford

As I learned in hours of interviews with their associates, Greenspan was a member of Rand's inner circle [and] lectured on economics for the Nathaniel Branden Institute. He wrote for the first issue of *The Objectivist Newsletter*, and when Rand broke with Branden, he signed a public statement condemning the traitor

"irrevocably." When Gerald Ford appointed him to the Council of Economic Advisors, he invited Rand to his swearing-in ceremony, and attended her funeral in 1982...

"I mean Alan will never be Mr. Warmth, that's just not his personality and nature. But the dourness, the grimness, the solemnity that he had when we first met him practically disappeared, I think, because he accepted us and knew that all of us including Ayn and Frank accepted him. It was like a family, it really was. And he was part of that family."

"He was her special pet, because he was older, and in the business world," recalls Edith Efron, who joined the Collective a few years later. "She didn't know anyone else very well who was a businessman. I think this was very important to her...she allowed him more intellectual liberty than she did other people."

Greenspan was unique among the Collective's older members. The first to join, he was virtually the only one not to be expelled; When Rand and Branden split, Rand asked Greenspan to repudiate Branden publicly. Without ever speaking to Branden, he agreed.

Shortly after his appointment to the Council of Economic Advisors, he was asked on "Meet the Press" whether he had changed

his opinion, published years earlier in a Nathaniel Branden Institute pamphlet, that anti-trust laws ought to be abolished. He replied forthrightly that he continued to believe they should be, Journalist Michael Lewis recently wrote that Greenspan "has preserved a hard core of fanaticism, encasing it in a shell of pragmatism. No more waiting for everyone to realize that extreme laissez-faire capitalism is the best system: He's taking control of the process himself, ever so quietly." Only a few months earlier, Greenspan had recommended to a Senate committee that all economic regulations should have fixed life spans. Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.) accused him of "playing with fire, or indeed throwing gasoline on the fire," and asked him whether he favored a similar provision in the Fed's authorization. Greenspan coolly answered that he did. Do you actually mean, demanded the senator, that the Fed "should cease to function unless affirmatively continued?" "That is correct, sir," Greenspan responded. "All right," the senator came back, "the Defense Department?" "Yes."

Excerpts from "**Alan Greenspan and Ayn Rand**"

By R.W. Bradford

Alan Greenspan's name first appeared in the *New York Times* not, as one might expect, in connection with politics or economics, but as the author of a 73-word letter to the editor of the *Times Book Review*. The future head of the Federal Reserve wrote to protest a hostile review of Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged* that had appeared a few weeks earlier.

It was the fall of 1957. By this time, Greenspan had abandoned a career as a jazz saxophonist, earned a degree at New York University's School of Commerce, enrolled in and abandoned the Ph.D. program at Columbia, worked as staff economist with what today would be called a think tank, and become a partner in a Wall Street economic forecasting firm.

Alert readers noticed Greenspan's name in the *Times* again seven weeks later, this time in Lewis Nichols' column "In and Out of Books." The subject was a group of admirers of Ayn Rand, who gathered on Saturday evenings in Rand's living room "for discussions of philosophy." Greenspan is listed among members of the group and identified only as "an economic consultant."

Nichols described the group as a "class," though he noted that "uncouth outsiders" were apt to use the language of religion rather than education to describe it. That may have been the last time Rand's

following was described as a class; as her acolytes grew in number and devotion, it gradually came to be treated as a religion and, increasingly, as a cult. At its head stood Nathaniel Branden, a psychotherapist 25 years Rand's junior. He lectured on Rand's philosophy of "Objectivism," co-edited (with Rand) *The Objectivist Newsletter* (later *The Objectivist*), and controlled access to Rand. He recently described the beliefs of the cult in these words: "Ayn Rand is the greatest human being who has ever lived. *Atlas Shrugged* is the greatest human achievement in the history of the world. Ayn Rand, by virtue of her philosophical genius, is the supreme arbiter of any issue pertaining to what is rational, moral, or appropriate to man's life on earth."

From its modest origin in the early 1950s, Rand's following grew rapidly. By the mid-1960s, over 20,000 copies of *The Objectivist* were selling each month, and people in more than 80 cities were gathering around tape recorders to listen raptly to Nathaniel Branden Institute lectures.

But all was not going well. Unbeknownst to everyone but their spouses, Rand and Branden had been having an affair since the mid-1950s, and by now Branden wanted out. This led to a bizarre chain of events, culminating with Rand calling Branden to her apartment,

where she slapped him around and cursed him (“If you have an ounce of morality left in you, an ounce of psychological health, you’ll be impotent for the next 20 years! And if you achieve any potency, you’ll know its a sign of still worse moral degradation.”). In the next issue of *The Objectivist*, she repudiated Branden “totally, permanently” because of a “disturbing change” in “his intellectual attitude,” to wit, “a tendency toward non-intellectual concerns.” She also charged him with poor management of their jointly owned publishing effort and detailed some of the events that had led to their split. She did not mention he had jilted her.

As I learned in hours of interviews with their associates, Greenspan was a member of Rand’s inner circle during this entire period and beyond. He lectured on economics for the Nathaniel Branden Institute. He wrote for the first issue of *The Objectivist Newsletter*, and when Rand broke with Branden, he signed a public statement condemning the traitor “irrevocably.” When Gerald Ford appointed him to the Council of Economic Advisors, he invited Rand to his swearing-in ceremony, and attended her funeral in 1982.

Greenspan was introduced to Rand by Joan Mitchell, a young woman he was dating. She was a friend of Barbara Weidman, Nathaniel Branden’s fiancée and already a member of the group of

young admirers who met in Rand's apartment. "I was not really able to interest him in Objectivism," Joan Mitchell Blumenthal recalls. She and Greenspan married, but quickly discovered they had little in common. It was only after their marriage was annulled that "he started showing up at Ayn's, a strange turn of events."

Greenspan and Rand didn't hit it off. According to Nathaniel Branden, he was philosophically a logical positivist and economically a Keynesian, both doctrines anathema to Rand. "How can you stand talking to him?" Rand asked Branden. "A logical positivist and a Keynesian? I'm not even certain it's moral to deal with him at all." (Barbara Branden doesn't remember it that way, and neither does Greenspan. She and Greenspan deny he was ever a Keynesian.)

Nathaniel Branden engaged Greenspan in some "very long and involved philosophical, metaphysical, epistemological, political, economic, and moral conversations," according to Barbara, which soon "had a profound effect upon him." He abandoned his positivism and Keynesianism, and soon, along with other members of the Collective (as the Rand's young acolytes ironically called themselves), he was reading chapters of *Atlas Shrugged* as it was being written.

"Alan became much warmer, more open, more available," recalls Barbara Branden. "I mean Alan will never be Mr. Warmth, that's just

not his personality and nature. But the dourness, the grimness, the solemnity that he had when we first met him practically disappeared, I think, because he accepted us and knew that all of us including Ayn and Frank accepted him. It was like a family, it really was. And he was part of that family..."

He remained the odd man out. Rand preferred people who were young and (as one member of the Collective remembers) "malleable." But she cut Greenspan some slack by virtue of his maturity and occupation. "He was her special pet, because he was older, and in the business world," recalls Edith Efron, who joined the Collective a few years later. "She didn't know anyone else very well who was a businessman. I think this was very important to her...she allowed him more intellectual liberty than she did other people."

One area where Greenspan was apparently permitted ideological deviation was economics. The "official" Objectivist theory of economics was the Austrian theory of Ludwig von Mises, which, among other tenets, holds that economic forecasting is impossible. The issue apparently wasn't discussed, but Greenspan continued his successful career as an economic forecaster after becoming involved with Rand. And he never, as one Collective member archly points out, "attended Ludwig von Mises seminars at New York University, despite ample

opportunity.” (Today, Greenspan describes himself as an “eclectic, free-market forecaster,” who “generally agrees with Austrian economics.”)

“He was different,” Barbara Branden recalls. “Which was very wise of him. He kept his private life to himself, which the rest of us did not do.” Another recalls he “used to come late to everything and leave early. And he had his own relationship with [Rand] which was dignified. And he kept somewhat aloof from everybody, which was a smart thing to do.”

And he remained a puzzle to some. “Alan Greenspan is incredibly terse,” one member told me, as if “everything he sends is a telegram and they’re charging by the word. He’s deliberately low-keyed and ponderous. On the other hand, he is a musician, so there obviously is a side of him that has passion and emotion, but...I would say he’s very guarded. He must be a wonderful poker player.”

Barbara Branden remembers this differently. “Alan had no talent for and no interest in small talk. So if people around him were engaged in small talk they wouldn’t get anything from him. I mean that he would simply stand there and have nothing to contribute. But if there was something interesting, then he was very social.”

Greenspan was unique among the Collective's older members. The first to join, he was virtually the only one not to be expelled. In 1957, economist Murray Rothbard read *Atlas Shrugged* and was enchanted. He wrote Rand an enthusiastic fan letter and was invited into her movement, only to be expelled less than a year later, ostensibly for plagiarism. Philosopher John Hospers, who never bought in to all of Rand's thinking on epistemology and metaphysics but was sufficiently sympathetic with her esthetics, ethics, and politics that he was a frequent guest at Collective gatherings, was expelled instantly in 1962 after he criticized Rand's address to the American Society for Esthetics, which he had arranged. Journalist Edith Efron, who had joined the Collective after she interviewed Rand for Mike Wallace's syndicated column, was expelled without explanation in 1967.

After the 1968 campaign, Greenspan returned to economic forecasting in New York, refusing job offers from the Nixon administration. Six years later, President Ford offered him a position as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors; Greenspan accepted. With Ford's defeat in 1977 he returned to private life, but was appointed by Ronald Reagan to head a special commission on Social Security in 1981. Since 1987 he has headed the Federal Reserve System.

From the start of his political career, questions have arisen about Greenspan's political beliefs. Shortly after his appointment to the Council of Economic Advisors, he was asked on "Meet the Press" whether he had changed his opinion, published years earlier in a Nathaniel Branden Institute pamphlet, that anti-trust laws ought to be abolished. He replied forthrightly that he continued to believe they should be, but he was well aware that such a move would be politically unpalatable for the foreseeable future.

Greenspan has also taken flack from other Randians for failing to implement policies that would radically free the economy. "Alan Greenspan, whatever his rationalization," John Ridpath of the Ayn Rand Institute told an interviewer for the Canadian Broadcasting Company, has "abandoned any philosophically principled stance" and "compromised himself and what he learned from Ayn Rand over and over."

Others accuse him of trying to implement those same policies in a deceitful manner. Journalist Michael Lewis recently wrote that Greenspan "has preserved a hard core of fanaticism, encasing it in a shell of pragmatism. No more waiting for everyone to realize that extreme laissez-faire capitalism is the best system: He's taking control of the process himself, ever so quietly." Only a few months earlier,

Greenspan had recommended to a Senate committee that all economic regulations should have fixed life spans. Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.) accused him of "playing with fire, or indeed throwing gasoline on the fire," and asked him whether he favored a similar provision in the Fed's authorization. Greenspan coolly answered that he did. Do you actually mean, demanded the senator, that the Fed "should cease to function unless affirmatively continued?" "That is correct, sir," Greenspan responded. "All right," the senator came back, "the Defense Department?" "Yes."

The Senator could scarcely believe his ears. "Now my next question is, is it your intention that the report of this hearing should be that Greenspan recommends a return to the gold standard?" Greenspan responded, "I've been recommending that for years, there's nothing new about that.... It would probably mean there is only one vote in the Federal Open Market Committee for that, but it is mine." This may be the first time that advocating a policy on a nationally televised Senate committee meeting has been characterized as trying to implement a policy "ever so quietly."

Excerpts from **"Greenspan Shrugged"**

By Ralph Nader (originally published by the San Francisco Bay Guardian Newspaper)

In an article published in 1963 as part of Ayn Rand's book *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, Greenspan declared that protection of the consumer against "dishonest and unscrupulous business was the cardinal ingredient of welfare statism."

In one case, Greenspan intervened directly with the principal regulator of Charles Keating's Lincoln Savings in an attempt to gain special exemptions from regulations for the institution. Risky investments ultimately brought Lincoln Savings down, sent Keating to jail, and cost the taxpayers \$2.5 billion. Greenspan became chair of the Federal Reserve

Not only has the General Accounting Office raised questions about the efficacy of the Federal Reserve's regulation of bank holding companies, but Greenspan has erected roadblocks to the collection of data important to consumer protection and fair lending as well.

In 1996 Greenspan was urged to help in the enforcement of fair lending laws by collecting data on the race and gender of applicants for small business and consumer loans. Despite pleas from the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and the Civil Rights Division of the

Justice Department, Greenspan and his fellow governors blocked the proposal.

This year Greenspan decided to end the collection of nationwide data on bank fees. The survey, which was authorized as part of the financial reforms adopted in 1989, has proven an excellent tool that consumer groups have used to highlight and battle the excessive fees that banks impose on consumers.

Similarly, the Federal Reserve is dropping its "Functional Cost Analysis" study, which has provided important data on how much it costs banks to provide services. This has been a great tool for measuring the validity of bank charges. Credit unions, particularly, have made good use of this data to dramatize fee and interest rate gouging by banks.

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