

An Introduction to Objectivism

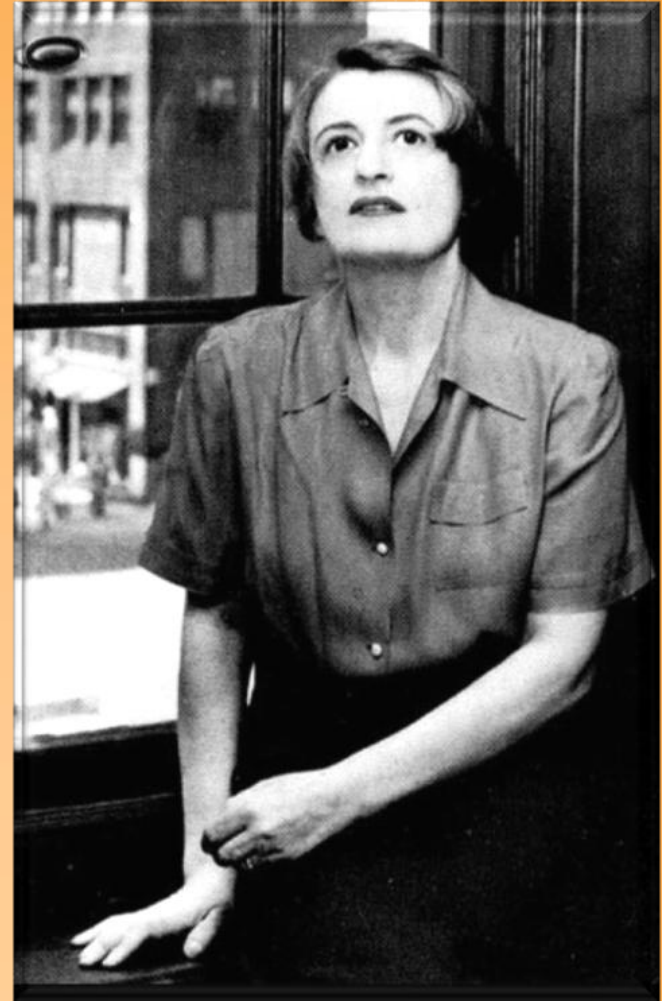
By the Virginia Tech Objectivist Club

My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.

—Ayn Rand

Who Was Ayn Rand?

- Born 1905 in St. Petersburg, Russia
- Opposed communist ideals from childhood
- Kerensky and Bolshevik revolution
- Graduated from University of Petrograd with history and philosophy degree
- Studied at State Institute of Cinema Arts



Who Was Ayn Rand?

- Rand idolized America
- Moved to NYC in 1926
- Started cinema work 1929 in Hollywood
- Met future husband, Frank O'Connor
- Wrote 1st screenplay, "Red Pawn", in 1932
- "We the Living" published in 1936
- "Anthem" '37
- "Fountainhead" '43
- "Atlas Shrugged" '57
- Died March 6, '82



<http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/17>

Who Was Ayn Rand?

- After *Atlas Shrugged* Rand focused on non-fiction, and lectures on objectivism
- Leonard Piekoff and the Collective
- The Collective started the Objectivist Movement
- Piekoff heads up ARI
- Had a tough time growing up and succeeding as a writer
- Never let her environment compromise what she wanted to do

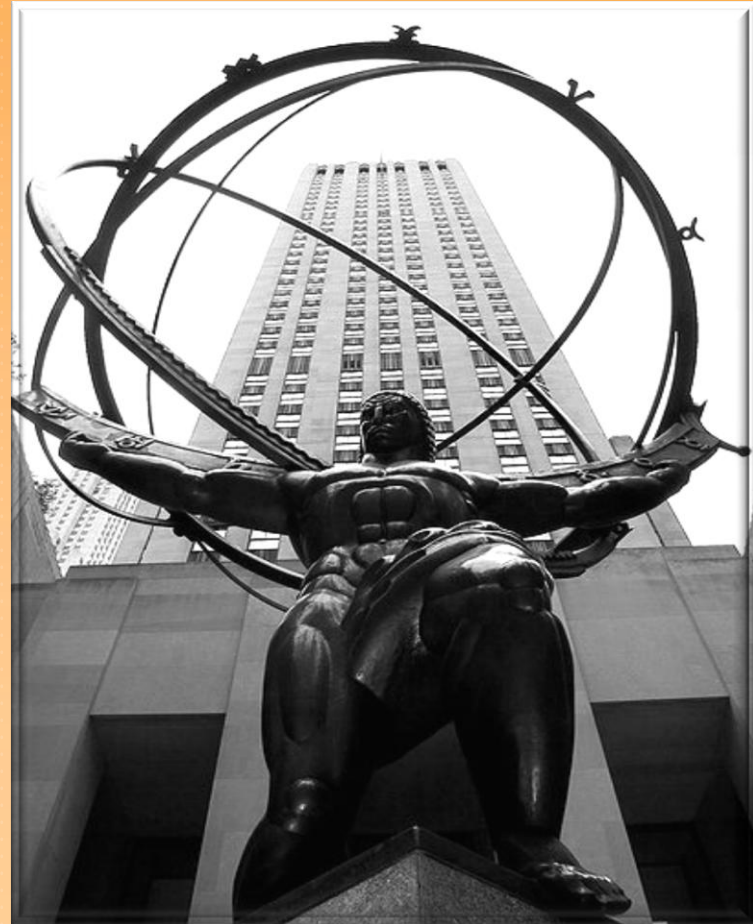


http://godscopybook.blogspot.com/2005/02/ayn_rand_celebr.html

A Brief Overview of Objectivism

There are 5
branches of
Objectivism

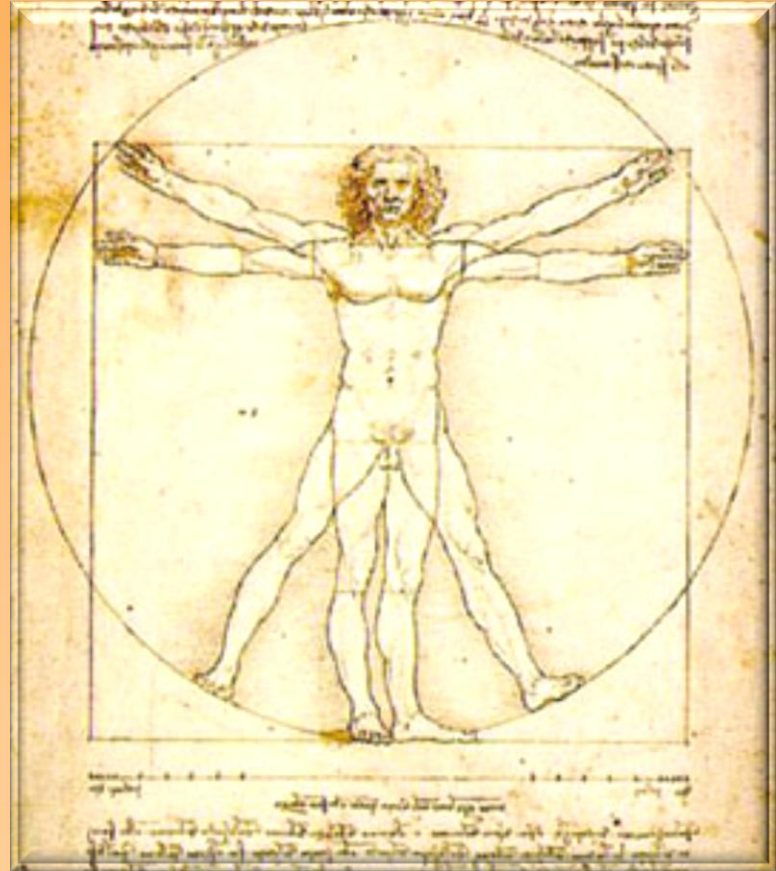
- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
- Ethics
- Politics
- Aesthetics



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Objectivist I .jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Objectivist_I.jpg)

Metaphysics: Objective Reality

- Three Axioms:
 - Existence
 - Identity
 - Corollary: Causal Realism
 - Consciousness



Epistemology: Reason

- Reason: “the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by man's senses.”
- Senses are valid: self-evident
- Rejection of faith, mysticism
- The true, the false and the arbitrary
- Deduction and induction
- Concept formation



<http://www.sharpbrains.com/blog/2008/06/05/your-brain-on-trading-101/>

Ethics: Rational Self Interest

- Naturalistic
- Mutualism, not predation
- Rejection of altruism
- Duty to neither god nor society
- Well-being cannot be attained by force



<http://www.desertspringscommunity.com/ethics-article.php>

Politics: Laissez-Faire Capitalism

- Individual rights
- Limited government
 - Duties: police, courts, military
- No taxes
- Gold standard



http://www.christianstogether.net/Articles/196568/Christians_Together_in/Christian_Life/Christians_and_Politics/Beyond_the_Election.aspx

Aesthetics: Romantic Realism

- Art projects concepts as percepts
- Romantic realism: things presented as they “could” and “should” be
- Examples:
 - Literature: Dostoyevsky, Cyrano de Bergerac
 - Music: Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Dvořák
 - Visual art: Michelangelo, Bouguereau
 - Ayn Rand, naturally!



<http://www.abt.org/performances/reviewsandquotes.asp>

Misconceptions of Objectivism

- Advocates selfishness (based on whims)
- Dogmatic
- Rejects Charity
- Represses Emotion
- Closed Minded
- Extremist
- Pursuit of money by any means



<http://starshipaurora.com/aynrand.html>

An Example on Selfishness

Adam and Bill work at the same steel plant. They both get \$250 per day. On the way home, they pass a kiosk accepting donations for Cancer Research. Bill donates \$50. Adam, who is saving up for a new sound system, just walks by. Which person is being selfish?

An Example on Selfishness

- Both people are being selfish- and that's fine.
- According to Objectivism, neither person is morally superior.
- Selfishness = Rational Self Interest
- Pursuing the things that you value the highest.



<http://afrocityblog.wordpress.com/2009/12/28/sonic-ninja-kitty-has-savvy-money-advice-for-the-girls/>

Does Objectivism Forbid Charity?

- There is a perception that Objectivists are against charity. This is not true.
- Private charity is fine. The donor is making a conscious choice to give his/her money to a charitable organization.
- Publically- Funded charity is where there is an issue (Money taken by force and spent without consent).



<http://www.metaphysics-for-life.com/free-metaphysics-gifts.html>

Bioshock as a Criticism

“I am Andrew Ryan, and I'm here to ask you a question. Is a man not entitled to the sweat of his brow? 'No!' says the man in Washington, 'It belongs to the poor.' 'No!' says the man in the Vatican, 'It belongs to God.' 'No!' says the man in Moscow, 'It belongs to everyone.' I rejected those answers; instead, I chose something different. I chose the impossible. I chose... Rapture. A city where the artist would not fear the censor, where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality, Where the great would not be constrained by the small. And with the sweat of your brow, Rapture can become your city as well.”



Bioshock as a Criticism

- Andrew Ryan gets tired of the notion that others have any right over what belongs to him.
- Builds a city underwater based on Objectivist principals
- The critique is that Objectivism would not work because the selfishness of the industrialists destroys (“dog-eat-dog” system)
- Therefore truly more Nietzsche than Rand



<http://www.thegamegods.net/2008/11/03/bioshocks-ps3-dlc-priced-laughed-at/bioshock-logo/>

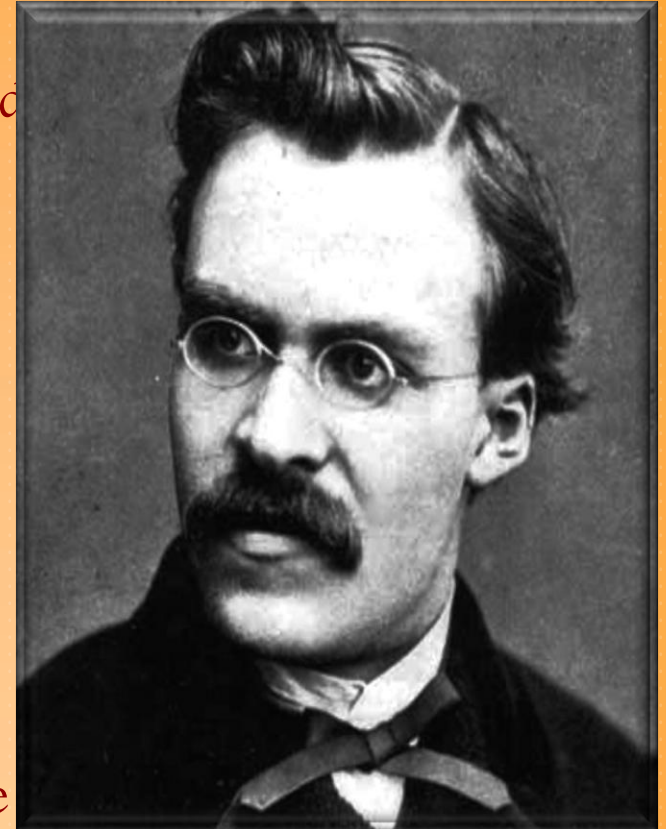
Objectivism and Nietzsche

Happiness is not the satisfaction of whatever irrational wishes you might blindly attempt to indulge....Just as I support my life, neither by robbery nor alms, but by my own effort, so I do not seek to derive my happiness from the injury or the favor of others, but earn it by my own achievement. Just as I do not consider the pleasure of others as the goal of my life, so I do not consider my pleasure as the goal of the lives of others.”

—Galt’s Speech, Ayn Rand, For the New Intellectual

Objectivism and Nietzsche

- Ayn Rand did not align herself with Nietzsche
- Nietzsche and Rand did both reject altruism and advocate living for the individual
- The major difference between the two is that Nietzsche advocated sacrificing others to yourself by following your instincts (think Machiavelli)
- Rand states everything must be based on rational thought—she would never advocate following your whims to an irrational end i.e. murder, lying, and thievery
- Nihilism vs. Productive Work as Purpose of Life



<http://srlucero.com/Existentialism/philosophies.html>

Some Similar Philosophers

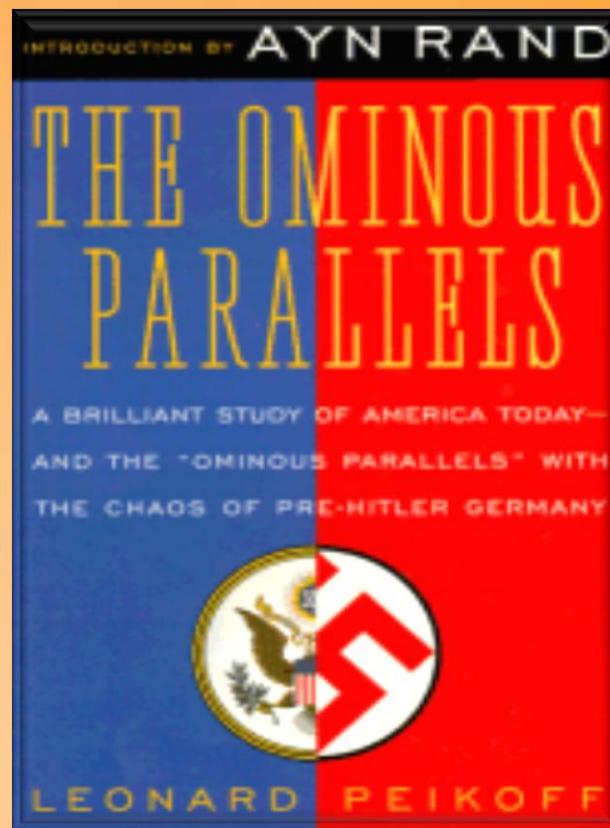
- Rand only acknowledged an intellectual debt to Aristotle
- Liked his ideas on logic and reality (“A is A”)
- Thomas Aquinas (only in that he advocated a return to reason and Aristotle)



<http://reichchemistry.wikispaces.com/T.+Patton+Big+Time+Line+Project>

Continuing Research In Objectivism

- Leonard Peikoff: *The Ominous Parallels*
- Leonard Peikoff: *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*
- David Harriman: *The Logical Leap: Induction in Physics*
- Elan Journo: *Winning the Unwinnable War America's Self-Crippled Response to Islamic Totalitarianism*
- John David Lewis: *Nothing Less than Victory: Decisive Wars and the Lessons of History*



<http://www.peikoff.com/lr/home.htm>

The Divide within Objectivism

- Nathaniel and Barbara Branden
- Confusing reason with “the reasonable”. Irrationalism and mysticism are not synonyms as Rand implied
- Reason is a process, reasonable is what a group may decide arbitrarily. Reasonable varies throughout history.
- Repression of emotion
- The Fountainhead shows the hero without emotion, and the villains subject to uncontrollable emotions.



http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/01/books/review/leonhardt.t.html?_r=1

The Divide within Objectivism

- People came to Branden wanting to know how to rid themselves of emotion—books are unhealthy
- The need for an understanding of psychological processes, not just philosophical premises.
- There is no encouragement or method to correct one's mistakes.
- “(She should have) encouraged us to develop a more open-minded attitude and to be less attached to a model of reality that might be in need of revision.”– Nathaniel Branden



<http://www.missliberty.com/pageL.htm>

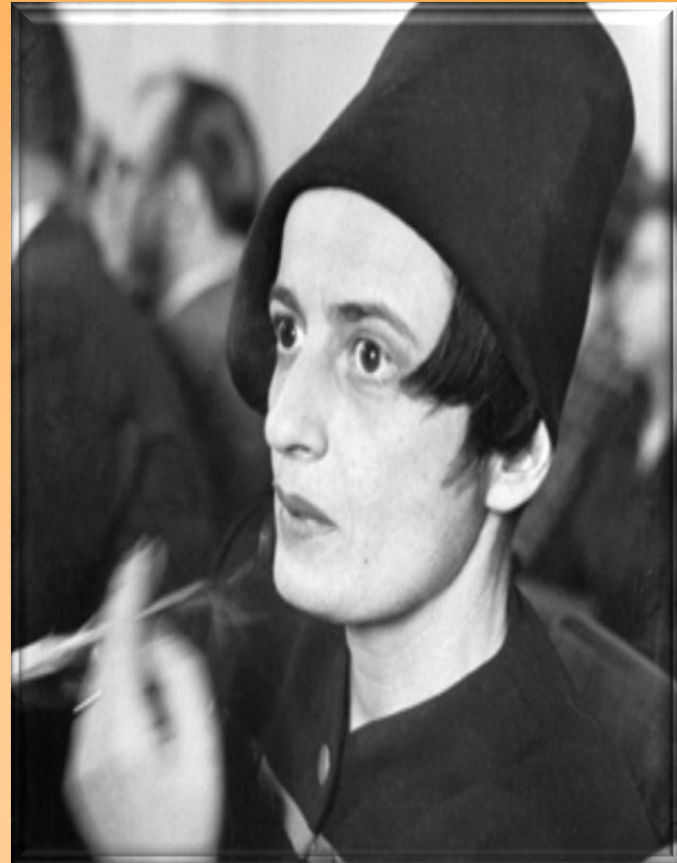
The Divide within Objectivism

- Ayn Rand Institute Vs. Atlas Society
- Closed System (Rand & Peikoff)- can't alter the core philosophy
- Open System (David Kelley)- as new ideas emerge, philosophy should be revised
- Kelley's 3 Essential Principles



The Divide within Objectivism

- A response to Kelley
- This self-defeating view cannot be called Objectivism
- “Agreement with the principles of Objectivism is the only requirement for being an ‘Objectivist.’”– Roderick Fitts
- Is Objectivism open to revision?
 - Can it still be considered Objectivism?
 - Is this a logically sound view to hold?



<http://salmonalley2009.blogspot.com/2009/09/atlas-farted.html>

Interested in Learning More?

- Contact our President, Justin Robey, at hokieobjectivism@gmail.com
- Find us on Facebook under Objectivist Club at Virginia Tech
- Visit The Ayn Rand Institute at aynrand.org
(make sure to check out the essay contests—first prize is \$10,000!)

References

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http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_peikoff_intro

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http://nathanielbranden.com/catalog/articles_essays/benefits_and_hazards.html

<http://www.noblesoul.com/orc/bio/biofaq.html#Q4.4>