

When to be Selfish: Objectivism at its Best!

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ABSTRACT

The word selfish usually conjures up a negative representation. Self-serving ambitions tend to be viewed as being disrespectful of others; however, there are times when being selfish are necessary and expected. When a man is hungry, he eats. When a man is cold, he gets warm. When a man has the ability to be productive and successful, the anticipation is that he will. Having the ability and opportunity to “become the best within us” is our charge to be selfish. Ayn Rand and her philosophy of Objectivism lead this charge.

Introduction

Ayn Rand introduced the world to her philosophy of Objectivism beginning in the mid 1930's. Objectivism 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. Using *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) this author will show how Ayn Rand lays out Objectivism to prove that selfishness is right and good.

Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this article is to establish the reasons that all men should be selfish. There is a time and place when it is appropriate for a self-serving motive. A man supporting his life through his best efforts is selfish, and it is right and good. A man who works to his utmost potential is selfish, and it is right and good. A self-made man who lives off the profit of his own capabilities is selfish, and it is right and good.

Atlas Shrugged

Rand's novel, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), opens with the question, "Who is John Galt?" John Galt is the epitome of Objectivism. He is a heroic being that allows society to crumble due to its unwillingness to integrate mind and productivity, and his unwillingness to compromise. The purpose of the character is to represent all that a man can achieve when he utilizes his mind to produce at his utmost ability in order to be successful. The question, "Who is John Galt?" represents how hopeless society has become due to failure of the economy. It is a question without an answer, asked out of weariness. The looters are unable to see how integrating the mind and body can benefit society as a whole can benefit.

The Virtue of Selfishness

The concept of selfishness is also explored in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1961). Rand describes the importance of concern for one's own interest, following on the heels of ethics. Being selfish does not imply doing so at the expense of others. The term selfish is usually connected with negativity; however, this was not Rand's intention. "An organism's life is its standard of value: that which furthers its life is the good, that which threatens it is the evil" (Rand, 1961, p. 17). To further one's life is selfish, and it is right and good. Each man is responsible for his own life and the direction it goes. Moving in a direction for the better is valuable, and one must be selfish to attain success.

Objectivism

Objectivism sets forth powerful messages that help to guide a man in living a life that is selfish in order for his survival. Selfishness, rationality, responsibility, collectivism, purpose, money, motive power, ethics, victim, achievement, hope, and morality are just a few of the

concepts of Objectivism pinpointed in this article to be addressed. The following themes are just a few instances of how Ayn Rand makes her point that selfishness is right and good.

Selfishness

Value the self above all else. Place nothing before the righteousness of the mind. A man's selfishness is how one recognizes the value in others because "the man who does not value himself cannot value anything or anyone" (Rand, 1961, p. 35). Human beings are the only creatures that can leave a legacy for those that come after them. Producing at high levels is selfish in the sense that one must focus on personal goals, but the outcome results in the service of others. This is where selfishness, if not for a virtuous purpose, may be misconstrued as something negative.

Selfishness without virtue is negative. Jim Taggart and Lillian Rearden falsely believe that they are much stronger than the producers. They are always looking for the weaknesses in others in order to control their motives. Jim Taggart believed "...to reveal any part of one's self was to give a weapon to an enemy..." (Rand, 1957, p. 399). Displaying weakness leaves a man open for attack. A man must be selfish in keeping himself in a position to take advantage of opportunities, as opposed to being ridiculed for his limitations. This attempt at exploitation can be avoided when one is focused on his endeavors. Jim and Lillian want to blackmail Rearden: Jim to get control of his business, and Lillian to make him feel guilty for his affair with Dagny. Jim, and his Washington friends, gains control of Rearden's business only to have it fail miserably due to their incompetence. When Lillian exposes Rearden's affair with Dagny, he actually feels relieved to not have to hide his affection for Dagny any longer. Both Jim and Lillian fail at their attempts because their selfishness was focused on exposing the weaknesses of others. When one focuses on the best within, his selfishness will preserve his integrity.

The oath at Galt's Gulch that all must abide by is: "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine" (Rand, 1957, p. 731). Committing to a principle is selfish and living a life that increases the value of another is also selfish; however, these things are right and good and contribute to the betterment of society. A man is responsible for himself and his joy. Being selfish is being concerned with one's own interest (Rand, 1961, p. vii).

Rationality

Rand believed that intelligence and hard work in harmony bring about productivity and prosperity, which are rational pursuits. Merging rational thoughts with facts is the best way to make effective decisions. "Any refusal to recognize reality, for any reason whatever, has disastrous consequences. There are no evil thoughts except one: the refusal to think" (Rand, 1957, p. 418). As the industrialists disappear one by one to Galt's Gulch, the rest of society is left

helpless because they refuse to think. They had left achievement as the responsibility of a few intellectuals, and the looters expected to benefit from their accomplishments. Without the industrialists, the looters are debilitated and unable to maintain society. This is indicative that rational individuals do not want to carry the sole burden of others, and will eventually find others who share their value for thinking and being productive.

Logic is imperative to good decisions, as well as rational thought. Being alive means being productive, that level of production is different for every individual. However, a more productive person should not be punished for less productive people. Since Hank Rearden is able to manufacture more metal than any other company he is forced to supply metal to compensate for the slack of the less productive companies. This results in Rearden not being able to serve his customers at the level they demand and expect. Ultimately Rearden is not given a choice for the businesses he produces metal due to the government sanctions. Is it right for government to set laws that protect incompetent companies? Survival is what man is attempting on a continuous basis, and to survive a man must be focused on taking care of himself and creating a life of security. Rearden has to comply with these laws in order to save his company, and to continue to do what he loves and that is being productive.

Dr. Akston refers to his most cerebral students: Francisco d'Anconia, John Galt, and Ragnar Danneskjöld as men who have been able to steer their lives in a direction of happiness, pursuing the goals they made for themselves, and maintaining the ability to be modern thinkers. "It does take an exceptional mind and a still more exceptional integrity to remain untouched by the brain-destroying influences of the world's doctrines, the accumulated evil of centuries-to remain human, since the human is the rational" (Rand, 1957, p. 786). Being focused on one's self takes rational thought. It is much easier to follow the path of failure, then to endure the struggles and overcome the hardships that lead to success.

John Galt's testimony on the radio reveals his passion for the importance of men to think. Thinking leads to reason, and reason is the "...one price that pays for man's survival..." (Rand, 1957, p. 1014). Having the discernment to make rational decisions requires man to be reasonable. A thinking being has a function in this world that requires value to be placed on his life, and intention requires one to maintain rational thought. Focusing on one's life to maintain rational thought is selfish, and in this sense being selfish is right and good.

Responsibility

Competent people take responsibility for their actions. The looters exemplify how "that evasion is the major cause of their frustrations and defeats" (Rand, 1961, p. 61). Wondering "why?," "what if?," "I wish" are all contemplations that release the responsibility of the individual to someone else. A responsible man will set out to get what he wants, and to alter the things that he is unsatisfied with. Being virtuous is working hard and having pride in the quality of work produced. Intrinsic motivation is what should motivate an individual to be productive, happy, and responsible.

When Dagny disappears, Rearden is threatened with the possibility of his affair with her going public. This is the way the government plans to blackmail Rearden to get control of

Rearden Metal. Rearden chooses to keep his affair with Dagny hidden to save her from public scrutiny. In taking this responsibility Rearden has to sign the Gift Certificate. He understands that “there is no escape from justice, nothing can be unearned and unpaid for in the universe, neither in matter nor in spirit-and if the guilty do not pay, the innocent have to pay it” (Rand, 1957, p. 565). Rearden believes that by protecting Dagny’s reputation he is taking responsibility for his own actions without defiling someone else. In reality, Rearden is allowing Dr. Ferris and his cohorts to manipulate him to give up his business because they thought having possession over his “miracle metal” is for the good of the people. Being productive is more than having the equipment to produce; it is being capable of sustaining a steady flow of output. In this case, Rearden Metal needs copper and other materials in order to produce metal. Since the government’s control of all businesses, purchasing these materials is virtually impossible. Simply owning Rearden Metal does not guarantee success of the looters. Thinking and action must be combined in order to be responsible to run Rearden Metal at a profit. The act of ownership of Rearden Metal involves responsibility of securing the materials required for the company to succeed.

Rearden taking responsibility for the negative outcome of his affair requires courage. It is ethical for a man to claim his actions to “...be a man who pays his own way...” (Rand, 1957, p. 566). Ayn Rand continuously encourages the importance for taking responsibility for individual actions in order to keep justice and organization.

Thriving off the good fortunes of others is being irresponsible and a coward. The looters are always searching for the path of least resistance. Once Dr. Stadler has descended to uselessness, he is willing to take credit for a lethal laser. The end result is always that the incompetent will come to the attention of the competent. Responsibility is the drive of a man who wants to live off his own mind. He is unyielding in the forfeit of his production to support others, as well as too proud to live off the fruits of others. Deserving what you sow is the path of a responsible man. Working hard to enjoy its benefits is selfish, it is right and good.

Collectivism

The socialist government only cares about the “common good,” and imposing equality and new laws for the benefit of the masses allows no one to benefit: collectivism. It is not the mandate of man to be his brother’s keeper. Galt, and the other industrialists, represent thinking people. Society lives in contradiction: citizens want change but comply with the status quo. Since the public does not want to think, then thinking people must leave the public. Cherryl, Jim’s wife, exemplifies the point Rand makes that change against the status quo is in effect impossible. Once Cherryl realizes that Jim is irrational, and a looter, she does more than leave the public, she leaves the world by committing suicide.

Initially the goals of socialism were to eliminate poverty and promote peace and prosperity. Unfortunately socialism degenerated into a violent manipulation of power. Take Nazi Germany as an example. “The essential characteristic of socialism is the denial of individual property rights; under socialism, the right to property (which is the right of use and disposal) is

vested in 'society as a whole,' i.e., in the collective, with production and distribution controlled by the state, i.e., by the government" (Rand, 1961, p. 100).

Successful individuals are usually successful for a reason-hard work. Forcing these individuals to maintain the quality of life for a collective less fortunate should not be mandated. Taking for granted the effort of someone else is unethical. The focused industrialists are able to enjoy their success, while the looters cannot because "...an inviolate peace of spirit is not the achievement of a drifter..." (Rand, 1957, p. 121). People must forge their own happiness. Although Francisco gave up his family copper mines and Dagny, he is willing to make these sacrifices to find pleasure in his existence of being a business pioneer.

One innovative individual is more successful than a destructive collective whole. This idea is exemplified in *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) when Dagny uses her hard work and motivation to complete the John Galt Line. This idea can also be destroyed when government gets involved. Rearden Metal is a thriving company, which once impacted by governmental laws, expires due to the impracticality of socialist demands. When people become successful, there are many who are jealous, and try to force those at the top to the bottom.

Collectivism of fraud only works on those that are not steadfast in their beliefs, "degrees do not matter...one does not bargain about inches of evil" (Rand, 1957, p. 303). When the government is looting Rearden Metal, Hank Rearden has to decide if he is willing to compromise his virtue to comply with the political agenda of Washington. Rearden realizes he is still in the business of trade: he is trading a high quality product, his respect and dignity, for a high quality business, Rearden Metal. It is regrettable that the trade is not with a high quality person, but for a collective greed. Unwillingness to sacrifice success for the collective whole retains one's hard work; this is right and good, and this is selfish.

Purpose

Having a purpose is what gives a man a course to pursue and drives him to achieve. Mediocrity is not the pursuit of a man who is intelligent and has a strong work ethic. A man must have a purpose, and living in a society that does not value individual purpose is not worth living in. All the industrialists feel this, and move to Galt's Gulch in order to be entrenched in an environment where inhabitants share this belief of purpose. Dagny and Rearden team up to build the John Galt Line in spite of the attempts of the looters to stop them. As Rearden is painstakingly reviewing the Line's blueprints, he anguishes over the potential for failure of the John Galt Line and it almost immobilizes him from continuing the project. It is when he reflects on the importance of attempting the project that he realizes giving up is not an option. Attempting to achieve is better than not, and this attempt gives a man purpose. He has a purpose and it is his duty to act: constructing the John Galt Line is the only option. The power of thought is capable of inspiring one into action to overcome obstacles and be successful; it "...is a weapon one uses in order to act. Thought sets one's purpose and the way to reach it" (Rand, 1957, p. 214). Purposeful living keeps one's selfishness centered on goals.

Man's capacity for thought and action are what keep society thriving. One must be decisive and responsible in order to have an intentional and purpose-driven life. A purpose is

derived from individual goals, and no one can give another a purpose to live. In Galt's attempt to plead with Dagny to disappear from society he explains how the work of the industrialists is how the looters have existed. The looters are profiting from the producers, and by Dagny staying she is being supportive of this behavior. This goes against the belief of those who are moral and virtuous because "...achievement is man's highest moral purpose..." (Rand, 1957, p. 619). Having a purpose includes attaining results at the highest potential possible. Setting goals indicates an outline for triumph. Intentional living signifies one's love and respect for life. Having a purpose requires one to focus on self, and this selfishness is what directs a man to success. This selfishness is right and good.

Money

People's intentions become lost when money becomes the forefront and dictates the direction of growth. Money is the manifestation of creativity and good because money buys the goods and services that people produce. Production propels society through the achievement of creative minds that produce goods and services that benefit the masses. "Money is the material shape of the principle that men who wish to deal with one another must deal by trade and give value for value" (Rand, 1957, p. 410). Productive people created money for the good purpose of barter. The intentions of man cause money to be evil: "...the man who damns money has obtained it dishonorably; the man who respects it has earned it" (Rand, 1957, p. 412). Character is shown through the intentions of the use of money.

Riding the Comet through the Rockies, Dagny bumps into Kellogg when the engine breaks down. Deciding that she and Kellogg will walk to get help she assigns Jeff Allen to be in charge while she is gone. Understanding that "...money inside a man's pocket had the power to turn into confidence inside his mind..." (Rand, 1957, p. 678), Dagny gives Allen one hundred dollars. Having the hundred dollars inspires Allen to take charge of the engines while Dagny is gone. It is possible for money to motivate a man to be successful and productive. Earning monetary rewards for useful output is positive in that it sparks one to achieve at high levels and encourages competition, which ultimately leads to better output. Achieving high levels in order to earn money is good and selfish; it allows for a man to be secure. Earning from the production of hard work is right and good.

Motive Power

Rand uses an unfinished motor in *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) to display its ability to save society because a modern thinker built an object that can benefit the world. This is the critical impact that the integration of the mind and body is able to have. Rand uses the motor to symbolize motive power because it has the ability to drive the world's economy, just as a rational mind is the motive power that drives man's existence. In Francisco's conversation with

Rearden, he explains that Rearden has allowed himself to be a product of society. He has done this by continuing to manufacture his metal for society although they have nothing to offer him in return. This point is also expressed through Rearden's willingness to support his family though they are ungrateful and disobliging in his efforts to make a living at the highest level possible. The notion of motive power is necessity, and industry and economy are only able to survive if it can grow. Man can only survive if he lives by his moral code, "man's motive power is his moral code" (Rand, 1957, p. 455). On Cherryl's wedding day, she is told "...there are people who'll try to hurt you through the good they see in you-knowing that it's the good, needing it and punishing you for it" (Rand, 1957, p. 392). Initially Cherryl is overcome with emotion and excitement at her marriage with Jim not realizing that Jim is a looter and that he will destroy her. Upon this realization sometime later, Cherryl is the one who is degraded by him for her inadequacies, she is the one punished, and ultimately she loses by deciding to commit suicide. All over society we see people being taken advantage of for doing good work. Dagny is abused by Jim for her mind and ability to prevail over the problems of Taggart Transcontinental and then is never publicly recognized. The same can be said for all the industrialists, hence the reason they left. Their capacity for the rational left them no choice but to exist outside of the society. Motive power is what drives a selfish existence.

The unity that the mind and body share can also be seen through Dagny and Rearden's affair. For the first time Rearden is able to not only appreciate the hard work of another, but to have another appreciate the hard work produced by him. His wife, Lillian, banished him physically during their years of marriage telling him that sex is for animals. In Dagny, Rearden meets his equal. He is able to share in the success of their joint venture of the John Galt Line and in the physical pleasure of their affair. Rearden is more than just useful for his mind in the production of Rearden Metal, but he is also able to bring physical pleasure to another human being. This helps him see that "...joy is the core of existence, the motive power of every living being, that it is the need of one's body as it is the goal of one's spirit..." (Rand, 1957, p. 564). The point of life is to live in a spirit of joy. Joy differs from person to person; however, it is the duty and obligation of each person to discover joy. Life is too short to settle for the mundane of the everyday. Searching for selfish joy is the motive power of man.

The fulfillment of the potential of the mind is what instills motive power in people. A former employee from the Twentieth Century Motor Company explains to Dagny how the Starnes heirs endorsed an environment for factory workers to compete to do a bad job. This happened because the workers were paid based on need as opposed to skill and output. Without recognition and motivation, individuals are not motivated to work, "there's no surer way to destroy a man than to force him into a spot where he has to aim at not doing his best, where he has to struggle to do a bad job, day after day" (Rand, 1957, p. 663). Eventually, the production of those who work hard benefits the whole. Rational thought in the achievement of production enables success and joy. Virtually all people want to be apart of something that is industrious. Adding to output and feeling useful is an ingredient of motive power. Searching for how to be productive is selfish because one must concentrate on the self and how he can serve. This selfishness leads to success, and this is right and good.

Ethics

Ethics is a guide that centers man in making choices in regards to his conduct. Deciding what is ethical is a question that is difficult to answer, leaving ethics as a subjective set of principles. In making these subjective decisions man is placing value on his life. “The Objectivist ethics holds man’s life as the standard of value-and his own life as the ethical purpose of every individual man” (Rand, 1961, p. 27). Rand uses her philosophy to objectify ethics as being a selfish pursuit.

Setting examples through lifestyle, and most noticeably leadership, is of ethical value from the Objectivist view of the producers. A sign of leadership is acting on what is right and what is true. No compromises: not that something SEEMS to be but that it IS (Rand, 1957, p. 512). Dagny, as a producer and product of Objectivism, is always ethical in the way she runs the railroad, and everyone knows she is the leader. Francisco is trying to let Dagny know that there are ethical individuals, like her, that exist. He wants her to realize those men are not the men she works with at Taggart Transcontinental, especially not Jim. This is an attempt for Francisco to intrigue Dagny about Galt’s Gulch without giving away its reality.

The main difference between the looters and the producers is the ethical value of the individual. The producers value their lives and work hard to perform at high levels. The looters on the other hand are satisfied with taking credit for the work of the producers and being as successful as the producers will make them. The question of ethics arises in this scenario. Why are the producers more ethical than the looters? A subjective viewpoint can argue either side. According to the Objectivist theory, the producers are ethical because they are concerned with individual interests not the collective gain. The ethical producers do not want to be successful at the expense of others. They are not willing to sacrifice the interests of another man or to take advantage of his good works. Although Jim is first in charge of Taggart Transcontinental, Dagny is the one who makes the decisions, and this enables Jim to appear successful. Jim is willing to sacrifice a fortune into Francisco’s copper mines without researching the risk because he takes for granted the success Francisco always has and assumes it is a safe investment. In these examples it is obvious the producers are the ones who are ethical; however, in present time ethics are easily blurred. Is it ethical to allow a leader to have the credit for the work of a follower? Earning success on one’s own premise is of the Objective view and it is ethical and selfish, and this is right and good.

Victim

People can force others to act, but not to think. Dr. Ferris wants to gain power and he plans to do so by putting Rearden on trial for illegal selling. Rearden knows that Dr. Ferris is unable to handle the operations of Rearden Metal and this makes him content. No amount of intimidation can force Rearden to cooperate because “there’s no way to rule innocent men” (Rand, 1957, p. 436). Rearden is not going to allow the likes of a looter such as Dr. Ferris to have control of his self-interest. The only act Rearden is guilty of is the selfish act of protecting

his business and himself. Like Atlas, Hank Rearden is carrying the load of society and he is being punished for being successful. Rearden finally decides that he will no longer play the role of the victim by, as Francisco pointed out, producing metal for them.

Having the focus and wherewithal to keep moving and even be alive, takes courage. On a train to Colorado, Dagny goes with the intention of keeping Quentin Daniels from quitting. He is her last hope in finding the “secret” of the motor. On the train a tramp tells Dagny “...it’s a sin to sit down and let your life go, without making a try for it” (Rand, 1957, p. 659). He is heading West for no other reason than he has not been there before. This resonates with Dagny because the tramp is fighting not to be a victim by leaving his situation and looking for new opportunities. Dagny does the opposite she fights to beat the looters by staying in society. She wants to lead the battle of the producers by outlasting the looters, and she feels that she can do this by dominating the railroad business. She knows that she is the best, and she feels that through sheer effort she will help the country overcome the looters and continue the work of Nat Taggart. Her determination is selfish, and she refuses to be a victim. She chooses to act, and is determined to bring life back to her family’s railroad.

A victim is one “...who surrenders his value is at the mercy of anyone’s will...” (Rand, 1957, p. 975). Lillian, as hard as she tries, is unable to destroy Rearden’s sense of personal value. She is never able to overtake his self-esteem. Lillian is a victim in her marriage. She is married to a man that does not value her pursuits of impressing others by the material wealth and status she has gained through the Rearden name. Lillian has not earned her position through her own effort, and this goes against all Rearden represents. In the same sense, Rearden is a victim in the marriage, in that he is married to a woman that does not value hard work and selfish pursuits of successful production.

A man must stand on individual principles in order to keep himself from settling for those of others. “Truth is the recognition of reality; reason, man’s only means of knowledge, is his only standard of truth” (Rand, 1957, p. 1017). John Galt spoke of the reality of selfishness. Not giving way to victimization is being selfish because “your standard of virtue is not an object, not an act, not a principle, but an intention” (Rand, 1957, p. 1030). Living a life of purpose involves having a purpose to live for, and understanding the implications of all it entails. To live with a purpose means to have goals and perseverance to attain them. Living a life of intention is selfish. Living a life in avoidance of being a victim is right and good.

Achievement

Only reason is the framework for achievement and prosperity. Faith and emotion are what can lead people to false hope and a feeling of entitlement. People must live for their own self-interest and pursue their values. Merely having “a desire to live does not give you the knowledge required for living” (Rand, 1957, p. 1013). Each individual must discover the purpose of his life. It took time for Rearden to realize that his marriage to Lillian was not what he wanted. He enjoys the affections of Dagny because he needs more than the success of his metal; he needs to also achieve the success of love and pleasure. The bracelet that Rearden gives to Lillian is symbolic of the success he achieves in creating Rearden Metal. To Lillian the bracelet is a silly

piece of jewelry. It is Dagny that recognizes the value of the bracelet; Rearden's achievement of the "miracle metal." Dagny is aggressive in getting the bracelet from Lillian by trading a diamond bracelet. While Lillian thinks Dagny is preposterous in taking the bracelet, Rearden realizes that Dagny is a woman worthy of its wear.

Dagny's relationships with Francisco, Rearden, and Galt were all in her search for a more fulfilling life. Her relationships are achievement on multiple levels. Dagny's relationship with Francisco was more of a young love. These were two young people that both dreamed of achievement by advancing their family's name and business. Neither of them necessarily needed each to fulfill this desire. Dagny's relationship with Rearden is the first time that both of them meet their equal in capacity for production. They are able to appreciate the business successes of the other, as well as combine their efforts in building the John Galt Line. Dagny's relationship with John Galt is the culmination of ultimate achievement. She has fallen in love with a man that understands the importance of selfishness and has created a society that relishes in achievement of the productive. Having the perseverance to find success is selfish, and this is right and good.

In addition to personal achievement there is also material achievement. Conception of one's own effort is being productive and that is what is important and moral. You are what you make. Francisco understands this concept early when he shares this with Dagny "there's nothing of any importance in life-except how well you do your work...It's the only measure of human value" (Rand, 1957, p. 100). That whatever else she becomes will derive from work. Giving back to society is how men are able to assess each other's output; determine achievement. Achievement is dependent on the mind, apply knowledge to succeed, and "live and act within the limit of your knowledge and keep expanding it to the limit of your life" (Rand, 1957, p. 1058). Learning is a lifelong process. Individuals must refuse to tolerate the constraints that others dictate; live for purpose and achievement to the highest individual ability. Success is found in individual output and this is selfish. Achievement is based on what one produces. "Every man is free to rise as far as he's able or willing, but it's only the degree to which he thinks that determines the degree to which he'll rise" (Rand, 1957, p. 1064). Physical labor will only take a man so far, it is his intelligence that will contribute to his achievement. Since the looters are unwilling to think, and the producers are tired of doing all the thinking, Galt's Gulch is the perfect atmosphere for the producers to think and work. Galt's Gulch allows for individuals to work and think in order to achieve, and this is selfish. Independent thought to guide one's life achievement is selfish, and it is right and good.

Hope

Moving to Galt's Gulch requires the producers to give up hope. Francisco has to give up the d'Anconia Copper mines and the love of his life, Dagny. Francisco is set to be the climax of the d'Anconia business, but because he is willing to release what he has, he is able to achieve this height in the Gulch. Francisco gives up hope in succeeding in society, to find the hope of succeeding in Galt's Gulch.

Rearden has to give up Rearden Metal, a factory that he has worked so hard to create without the support of his family. He also gives up Dagny, the first woman he has ever met who

shares the same values of selfishness as he. She is also the first woman to show him the pleasure of the integration of mind and body. Dagny is his equal. Rearden gives up hope in the domination of his “miracle metal” in society in order to find hope in the unregulated success of his metal in Galt’s Gulch.

Dagny has to give up Taggart Transcontinental; the railroad created by her ancestor Nat Taggart. Dagny gives up the fight against the looters, which she so badly wants to win. Dagny gives up the fight, period. She thrives on continuously proving the righteousness of hard work. She gives up hope, so she can find hope somewhere else. So she can find hope in Galt’s Gulch.

All in all, these producers give up what they hope to gain in society. They give up what success they have envisioned for themselves. John Galt discovers the gulch because he gives up the motor that has the potential to save the world. By giving up what he is able to offer, he is able to give more to the people that share his same values. Galt creates a land of hope. When the intellectuals move to Galt’s Gulch, they are able to revitalize their hope in selfish pursuits of success. Living and producing in the Gulch, everyone is able to benefit from the success of others. Their hope is selfish, and it is right and good.

Morality

Man’s Life, through the Objectivists view, is to be moral. John Galt wants the world to share his belief of selfishness in order to be successful without infringing on the rights of others. His final plea is for everyone to be rational and good and to destroy the evil that exists. “There is a morality of reason, a morality proper to man, and Man’s Life is its standard of value” (Rand, 1957, p. 1014). There are times when it is appropriate to pass judgment on those who are corrupt. All are required to differentiate right from wrong, and to hold others accountable.

Looters are not entitled to take advantage of the rights of others. “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 to work for his values and to keep the product of his work. If life on earth is his purpose, he has a right to live as a rational being: nature forbids him the irrational” (Rand, 1957, p. 1061). Maintaining integrity is exercised through the mind and keeping impeccable facts in order facilitates rational judgment. People do not choose to exist, but they do choose to live. Survival is the ultimate goal of everyone. How one lives is the degree of how one values his life. Valuing individual life is moral and selfish, and it is right and good.

Discovering our potential is ultimately what Ayn Rand expects of all people. Most importantly, “...we must always reach for the best within us” (Rand, 1957, p. 6). Rand not only entices the reader early in *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) with this notion of the best within, but she also titles her last chapter “In the Name of the Best Within Us.” Atlas shrugged because the weight of the world was killing him and he got nothing from it. People must ask questions of those that accept the status quo, they must think independently, and they must act selfishly. This last “... is man’s foremost obligation...” (Rand, 1957, p. 334). In Atlantis, the rule is that “...one must always see for oneself” (Rand, 1957, p. 709). The story of the producers demonstrates the importance of self, and what one is able to achievement. Thinking is an act that only an

individual can do, and no one can force a person to think. Putting thought into action, and being productive, is the crescendo of being selfish. “I am, therefore I think” (Rand, 1957, p. 1058).

Ayn Rand’s, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964), is a collection of essays that attempt to explain her philosophy of Objectivism. The hope is to apply the concepts to today’s society and culture. “Its purpose is to provide its readers with a consistent philosophical frame of reference” (Rand, 1961, p. xii). Understanding selfishness, through the eyes of an Objectivist, is how one is able to objectivity one’s life. It is how one is able to be selfish in a way that is right and good.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, being selfish is the only avenue for a man to take in order to live a productive and successful life. Each individual is responsible for finding joy and making decisions in sharing that joy with others. No one is obligated to be his brother’s keeper. Ayn Rand’s philosophy of Objectivism gives the framework for a man to survive in today’s civilization. In the end, production is good for the whole. All men should be selfish in order to achieve a fulfilling life this is right and good.

References

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