

Objectivism Expository Speech

“Thousands of years ago, the first man discovered how to make fire. He was probably burned at the stake he taught his brothers to light. He was considered and evildoer who delt with a demon mankind dreaded. But thereafter men had a fire to keep warm, to cook their food, and to light their caves. He had left them a gift they had not conceived and he had lifted darkness off the earth. Likewise, the first motor was considered foolish and the airplane considered impossible. But the men of unborrowed vision went ahead. They fought, they suffered, and they paid. But they won.”

This was written in Ayn Rand’s The Fountainhead, a leading Objectivist philosopher. The theory of Objectivism, based on enlightened self-interest, was created by Ayn Rand 50 years ago and is being expanded today by modern philosophers like Leonard Peikoff.

The basic idea of Objectivism consists of four ideas. First, reality exists as an absolute; facts are facts, regardless of man’s feelings, wishes, hopes, and fears. Second, reason is man’s only means of perceiving reality, his only source of knowledge, his only guide to action, and his basic means of survival. Third is a belief that man is an end unto himself and should never be used as a means. One must exist for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself nor sacrificing others to himself. The pursuit of happiness and rational self-interest is the highest moral purpose of life. Fourth is a belief in laissez-faire capitalism, where the government is only a policeman and there is a complete separation of state and economics.

To understand where this philosophy, I will examine several Objectivist philosophers. Ayn Rand was the originator of the philosophy. She was born on Feb. 2, 1905 in St.Petersburg, Russia. At that time, Russia was already engulfed in revolution. She saw the rise of democracy in the face of the monarchy and its subsequent fall to the Communist Bolsheviks. Even at an early age, Rand began the formation of the idea that would later become Objectivism. She said this :

“Even at that age, I could see what was wrong with communism. It meant living for the State. I realized they were saying that the illiterate and the poor had to be rulers of the earth because they were illiterate and poor. (Communism) was the demand for the sacrifice of the best among men, and for the enshrinement of the commonplace, that I saw as the unspeakable evil of communism.”

She left St. Petersburg for Crimea in 1918 where she lived until she graduated from high school in 1921. She moved to the United States in 1926 and became a citizen in 1931. She wrote many novels about her life in Russia and about her philosophy. The Ayn Rand Institute was created by her to continue her philosophy. She died in 1982.

Dr. Leonard Peikoff is the chairman of the Ayn Rand Institute and is considered Ayn Rand’s intellectual heir. He studied with her while she was writing in America and he was in college

working on his PhD. In 1980, he wrote The Ominous Parallels, which is a book about how America is following the same path to totalitarianism that Nazi Germany did. He emphasized that ideas, not accidental events, shape history and that collectivism and altruism led to the rise of Hitler to power. He also wrote a lot of university lecture courses on Objectivism. The book that Dr. Peikoff considers to be his best is Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand, which is a thorough examination and explanation of Objectivism.

Other Objectivist philosophers include many professors. Andrew Bernstein teaches Objectivism at Marymount College in New York and gives extensive lectures on Rand's philosophical fiction. John Ridpath lectures and debates in favor of the Objectivist capitalism. His research mainly deals with ideas and their impact on social change.

The Fountainhead is Ayn Rand's most famous work. It shows Objectivism by portraying a fantasy world that is extremely close to reality. The main character is Howard Roark, an architect who is the total Objectivist ideal. The antagonist is the nameless world, led by the ultimate people-controller named Toohey. There are several other characters that serve as examples of the faults of collectivism, how transparent life through others is, and many other characters that waver at a sort of half-Objectivist-half-Collectivist status. The plot centers around encounters between the two rival philosophies in various conditions while proclaiming the truth of Objectivism. This book mainly provides examples of Objectivism in action for others to read.

The philosophy of Objectivism promotes the idea of creators versus second-handers or the individual versus a collective. The Creators are those who follow the objectivist philosophy, are "self-sufficient, self-motivated, and self-generated", and serve no one but themselves. Second-handers are social parasites that survive only through others and makes others their prime motive in life.

When comparing creators to Second-handers, or parasites, there are many differences shown. The creator originates while the parasite borrows. The creator faces nature alone while a parasite faces it through an intermediary. Creators cannot rob, exploit, or rule, because to do so creates dependence on other men.

Altruism is viewed by Objectivists as the idea that people live for others and place others above the self. It is a weapon of exploitation and teaches dependence as a virtue. It is to be compared to slavery. If physical slavery is so repulsive, how much more repulsive is the concept of the slavery of the spirit? A physical slave has the merit of having resisted and of considering his condition evil. Those who enslave themselves voluntarily degrade both the dignity of man and the concept of love.

Through this value, we praise an act of charity but shrug an act of achievement. It teaches that our first concern is to relieve the suffering of others. To make altruism the highest test of virtue is to make suffering the most important part of life. Then people must wish to see others suffer in order that they may be virtuous. Such is the nature of altruism according to Objectivism.

The creators dislike altruism as they are concerned with life, not disease. Yet the work of the

creators have brought more relief from suffering than any altruist can ever conceive.

Another Objectivist contention is that religion's monopoly on the field of ethics has made it extremely difficult to communicate the emotional meaning of a rational view of life. Religion has taken the highest moral concepts of our language and placed them beyond man's reach. Ayn Rand once said, "I had decided that the concept of god is degrading to men. Since they say god is perfect, and man can never be perfect, then man is low and imperfect and there is something above him -which is wrong." Objectivists see religion as part of those who are man-haters that see people as helpless and contemptible and struggle to never let him discover otherwise.

Objectivists instead promote man-worship or seeing man's highest potential and striving to actualize it. The belief promotes the exaltation of self-esteem and the sacredness of happiness.

To Objectivists, civilization is seen as progress toward a society of privacy. A savage's whole existence is ruled by the laws of his tribe. Civilizing is the process of setting man free from man.

They also present that the "common good" of a collective was the claim and justification in every tyranny ever established by man. Every major horror of history was committed in the name of some altruistic motive for the good of the masses. Look at Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. They accepted that men must be sacrificed for other men to form a perfect society. Has any act of selfishness ever equaled the carnage perpetrated by disciples of altruism?

I have shown you the view of an Objectivist and have shown its viewpoint in brief. To show Objectivism well enough to really justify it to a listener would take longer than given in a single speech. I will close with another quote from The Fountainhead that can serve as a basic summation of the main idea of Objectivism:

"The first right on earth is the right of the ego. Man's first duty is to himself. His moral obligation is to do what he wishes, provided his wishes do not depend primarily upon other men. This includes the whole sphere of his creative faculty, his thinking, his work. But it does not include the sphere of the gangster, the altruist, and the dictator."

underlines = action

US, Communism, Committees