

# Triumph and Tragedy: The Morality of Ayn Rand Versus The Objectivist Ethics

## *Part I: The Role of Personal Desires in a Happiness-Oriented Objective Egoistic Morality*

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*“It's the theory of concepts that made me disagree with Ayn Rand in her own identification of herself... I would insist that she was like Plato or Aristotle and she'd say “No, I'm just like Socrates, I have some interesting ideas but I need to find the Plato who will make a total philosophy out of my interesting ideas.”<sup>1</sup>*

## Preface

The morality of Ayn Rand, as expressed in her life and novels, was a triumph over its predecessors. Her predecessors were typically moralities of subjectivity or self-sacrifice (for God, society or duty). Rand's was a happiness-oriented objective egoistic morality.

Rand aimed for the Objectivist Ethics to express the morality she dramatized in her novels. She wanted a rational ethics that would prescribe an objective egoistic morality that is a sufficient guide to happiness. Tragically, due to some false assumptions in meta-ethics, the Objectivist Ethics failed to realize Rand's ambitious goal.

Any rational ethics depends logically on its meta-ethical theories. Meta-ethics is the study of the nature of man, and of what in reality ethical theories and concepts are referring to. Since knowledge is hierarchical, wrong theories at the fundamental level, lead to wrong theories throughout. So an objective ethical theory can be no better than the theories of meta-ethics it rests upon. An inadequate definition of man, can lead to a wrong theory of human nature; of happiness; of objectivity; of egoism, and wrong ethical theories and prescriptions. Such was the problem with the Objectivist Ethics. It was undermined by false assumptions in meta-ethics. What those false assumptions were, the problems they caused, the alternatives, and the solutions, will be the topics of a series of papers, of which this is the first.

Rand's morality is founded upon an unprecedented integration of three foundational pillars: happiness, objectivity, and egoism. Unfortunately her meta-ethical false assumptions prevented her from being able to integrate these three pillars without contradiction. The first three papers in the series will focus on different false assumptions and how they prevented the three pillars of happiness, egoism, and objectivity from being integrated without contradiction in Rand's Objectivist Ethics.

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<sup>1</sup> Peikoff. 1988 “Certainty and Happiness” Conceptual Conferences, Lecture Q&A (This is not the Ford Hall

This paper will focus on how false assumptions about the nature of moral objectivity (i.e., it being a type of epistemological objectivity) logically necessitated that she exclude personal desires from her conception of egoism, which she was reluctant to do. This had the unintended consequence of making her ethics an insufficient and misleading guide to happiness.

## Introduction

The achievement of happiness requires the guidance of personal desires. The morality of Ayn Rand, as expressed in her life and novels, advocated the guidance of personal desires but her ethics does not. For Rand the dramatist, egoism or selfishness meant not only being guided by your own reasoning and knowledge, but also being motivated and guided by your own personal desires. In her fiction she dramatized this selfishness with her heroes pursuing their own personal passions to achieve their own happiness.<sup>2</sup> Rand's ethics rested on an unprecedented commitment to three foundational pillars: happiness, objectivity, and egoism. This last, egoism, Rand sometimes referred to as selfishness, self-interest, rational self-interest, or “the best within you”. Tragically, the Objectivist Ethics has no guidance role for personal desires because of an assumption about the nature of objectivity, which needs to be questioned because it makes her ethics an insufficient guide to happiness. Consequently, the Objectivist Ethics misrepresents the morality of Ayn Rand. Moreover, the implicit morality dramatized in Ayn Rand's novels, is superior to her explicit Objectivist Ethics, i.e., it is a superior guide to happiness.

Why did Ayn Rand exclude a guidance role for person desires in her ethics? It was not because Rand was anti-emotion. On the contrary, she was a passionate valuer, as were the heroes in her novels. It was not because she thought the guidance of personal desires did not belong in morality; in fact as you will see, she criticized the duty ethics for excluding them. She excluded them because she could not, in logic include them, and maintain consistency with several meta-ethical assumptions she held: e.g., that reason is the only possible objective mental method; and knowledge is the only possible objective mental content. She regarded moral objectivity as a species of epistemological objectivity, and this is what logically forced her to exclude a guidance role for personal desires. The Objectivist Ethics misrepresents the morality of Ayn Rand because the dramatized morality of Ayn Rand includes a guidance role for personal desires where the Objectivist Ethics does not.

The distinction drawn herein between *morality* and *ethics* is that a *morality* is the volitional self's most fundamental guidance system, the one that actually directs a person's choices and actions longest range. An

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<sup>2</sup> “All the rest of the book [The Fountainhead] is a demonstration of how the principles of egoism and altruism work out in people and in the events of their lives. I have been asked why I chose to present a philosophy of ethics in fiction form.” The Letters of A.R., Appendix: A Letter From Ayn Rand To The Readers Of The Fountainhead.

*ethics* is a *representation* of a morality in the form of conceptual knowledge. A simple way to hold it is this: ethics is the theory and morality is the practice. Every human who has an ethics has a morality, but those who have a morality may or may not have an ethics – i.e., they may not conceptually understand their morality. Analogously, every building has a structure but not every building has blueprints. Morality is like the physical structure of a building. Ethics is like the blueprints representing that structure. Just as the real life building will always be more complex than the blueprints, so a person’s morality will always be more complex than his ethics. Also, just as a building may differ from its blueprint, so an ethics may differ from the morality it represents.

The process of converting a morality into an ethics is not automatic or infallible. Mistakes can be made by anyone and we contend that Rand made mistakes in her attempt to understand her own implicit morality and represent it in an explicit ethical system. Herein examined will be: symptoms of some of Rand’s critical meta-ethical errors and the beginnings of an analysis of the root cause. Emphasized in this paper, is how Rand’s morality differed from her Objectivist Ethics on the issue of egoism, particularly the role of personal desires in morality.

The meaning and validity of the Objectivist Ethics and especially Rand’s meta-ethics, has been the subject of numerous long-standing debates. The reason is not primarily that Rand failed to make her system of ethics clear. As we will show this was an impossible task. The reason is that the Objectivist Ethics is not system – not in the sense of a non-contradictorily integrated whole. It is more like three mutually exclusive subsystems held together by equivocations, resting on false assumptions. Given these false assumptions it is impossible to make clear, or understand as a non-contradictory whole. Let’s first examine her morality, then her ethics.

## **The Morality of Ayn Rand Includes a Guidance Role for Personal Desires**

The morality of Ayn Rand includes a guidance role for personal desires. Claiming desires are essential to morality would imply that if you don’t desire a “good” then it’s not really a moral good for you; in other words, for it to be a moral good you *must desire* it. This would mean even if you know the “good,” and act for the “good,” and achieve the “good,” if you also hate the “good” (for being the good), it’s not really a moral good for you -- because it won’t add to *your* happiness. Rand writes in her journals: “The essence of morality is to desire that which is the good.”<sup>3</sup> This quote is some evidence she may have believed something like this at some point.

There is further evidence in the following quote where Rand tells us of her view of the role of personal desires in the moral realm, disparaging the way personal desires are treated in the duty ethics:

“In a deontological [duty-centered] theory, all personal desires are banished from the realm of morality; a personal desire has no moral significance... If a man wants to be honest, he deserves no moral credit; as Kant

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<sup>3</sup> Rand. *The Journals of Ayn Rand*, Part 3 - Transition Between Novels, The Moral Basis of Individualism

would put it, such honesty is ‘praiseworthy,’ but without ‘moral import.’...This is the sort of theory that gives morality a bad name. A deontological (duty-centered) theory of ethics confines moral principles to a list of prescribed ‘duties’ and leaves the rest of man’s life without any moral guidance, cutting morality off from any application to the actual problems and concerns of man’s existence. Such matters as work, career, ambition, love, friendship, pleasure, happiness, values (insofar as they are not pursued as duties) are regarded by these theories as *amoral*, i.e., outside the province of morality. If so, then by what standard is a man to make his daily choices, or direct the course of his life?”<sup>4</sup>

To state it positively, Rand is here making two points: 1) morality is relevant to such matters a career, love, friendship, happiness, etc.; and 2) personal desires are relevant to morality. Putting it together, a man should “make his daily choices,” and “direct the course of his life” in matters such as career, love, friendship by a moral standard that incorporates personal desires. This implies to be moral you must pursue your personal desires.

### **Betraying Personal Desires as *Moral Treason***

So for Rand, failing to pursue your strongest personal desires or passions can be immoral. In fact, Rand morally condemned two men's failure to pursue their personal desires in her article “Art and Moral Treason” (A&MT). Two men she knew were not pursuing their passions. She judged it as “*moral treason*.” “When I saw Mr. X for the first time, I thought that he had the most tragic face I had ever seen: it was not the mark left by some specific tragedy, not the look of a great sorrow, but a look of desolate hopelessness, weariness and resignation that seemed left by the chronic pain of many lifetimes. He was 26 years old...Yet his frozen impersonality suggested a man who neither felt nor wanted anything any longer. He was like a gray spread of ashes that had never been on fire...I could not discover any major ideological sin, any crime commensurate with the punishment he was suffering...” Mr. Y. was in a similar state. “Mr. Y...still loved music and he owned a large collection of records, which he played frequently-for an aesthetic pleasure that conveyed no personal meaning to him and evoked no personal emotion; all the records were classics... *he did not own a single record of ballet music*.... What I felt was a cold shudder. Whatever the root of his problems, this was the key; it was the symptom, not of amorality, but of a profound moral treason. To what and to whom can a man be willing to apologize for the best within him? And what can he expect of life after that?”<sup>5</sup> Please note, Rand called these men’s deliberate sacrifice of their personal desires “moral treason” to the “best within him.” In *A&MT* Rand demonstrates that refusing to pursue your personal desires can be immoral. This makes sense for a morality that aims to be a sufficient guide to happiness, since you can't be happy without pursuing your personal desires.

Further, echoing her views in A&MT, Rand's views on the role of personal desires in morality appear repeatedly in her novels. Her heroes dramatize the pursuit and satisfaction of personal passions. The distinctive Randian

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<sup>4</sup> Rand, Causality Versus Duty, *The Objectivist*, July 1970

<sup>5</sup> Rand, Art and Moral Treason, *The Objectivist Newsletter*, March 1965

hero is portrayed as moral, not only because he refuses to sacrifice his reasoning mind, but more than that, because he refuses to sacrifice his *personal passions* to anything or anyone. For example, Rearden held a personal passion for an affair with Dagny and refused to sacrifice it to his own conscious conviction that the affair was immoral; Howard Roark refused to sacrifice his personal passion for architecture to a romantic relationship with a malevolent Dominique when she urged him to quit for her; Ragnar refused to sacrifice his personal passion for delivering his brand of justice to a safer life in the valley; John Galt refused to sacrifice his romantic love for Dagny to the security of his own life, safe in the valley, when he followed her back to a collapsing world. Moreover, just as Roark gets moral credit for satisfying his desire to be an architect, Peter Keating gets moral blame because he sacrificed *his desire* for a career as a painter. What makes Keating an immoral second-hander is not only sacrificing his thoughts to the thoughts of others, but also sacrificing his personal desires to the personal desires of others. These examples show that (at times) Rand placed *nothing* above the pursuit of ones strongest personal desires – not conscious convictions, not any lesser desires, not even *life* itself.

Rand emphasized personal passions because she believed that achieving your personal passions is essential to your happiness, and happiness is man's "highest moral purpose."<sup>6</sup> Thus, to sacrifice your personal passions is to sacrifice your happiness. Again, for Rand, one's strongest personal desires have *moral* import and sacrificing them can be a *moral* vice.

We know from introspection that the capacity to enjoy an achievement presupposes the capacity to desire it. If we achieve something we have no desire for (and no capacity to desire), we won't get joy from its achievement. Its achievement will leave us indifferent or regretful. Joy comes only from achieving what we desire (or at least have the capacity to desire). In so far as "happiness is a state of non-contradictory joy," we must pursue our desires to achieve our happiness.

## Morality as a Sufficient Guide to Happiness

Not only did Rand think morality is a *necessary* guide to happiness, but also that it should be a *sufficient* guide to happiness; and this is implied in the following quote from the Objectivist Ethics: "If you achieve that which is the good by a rational standard of value, it will necessarily make you happy..."<sup>7</sup>

## Validated Personal Desires

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<sup>6</sup> Rand, Atlas Shrugged, Part 3, Chapter 7, p. 932

<sup>7</sup> Rand, The Objectivist Ethics, The Virtue of Selfishness, p. 32

Personal desires are essential to morality because they are essential to happiness and are not some guilty secret to be evaded or frustrated but rather used as guidance. For example, the passionate pursuit of a dream career, the longings of romantic love deserving to be satisfied, are essential moral means to the ultimate end of happiness. Morality for Rand was not a sterile, duty-bound, joyless graveyard, but a vibrant passionate guide to your happiness. But what about Toohey's passion to put Roark in prison; Stadler's passion for scientific knowledge, even if it meant an evil state would control the results of his work; or Wynand's passion for crushing men of integrity?

Rand rejected personal desires as a fundamental. She thought, spoke and acted as if she could differentiate between valid and invalid personal desires, though she defined no explicit method of doing so beyond validating the truth of beliefs underlying desires. She distinguished between valid and invalid desires, i.e., happiness-oriented personal passions (formed by an objective method), which she regarded as valid, and those not happiness-oriented (e.g., motivated by power-lust), or those formed by a non-objective method, which she considered invalid. Toohey's passion to put Roark in prison was not motivated by his own happiness as his highest moral value because he was a power-lusting nihilist; his ultimate end was aimed at the destruction of all moral values. His desire was invalid for that reason. Stadler aimed for his own happiness, but his passion for science was invalidated by a non-objective method of moral evaluation that included evasion, and so too his passions were invalid. Rand's view of Wynand's passion was a bit more nuanced, although she did not approve of his passion to crush men of integrity, Rand portrayed him as honestly mistaken in his view of human nature and did not consider him immoral. Nevertheless, Wynand's passion was invalid as it was based on a wrong model of human nature and she made him pay the price of his mistake with his own lack of happiness.

There is no written code or guidance in the Objectivist Ethics instructing us on how to validate personal desires. As if sensing the need and wanting to fill that void, Peikoff gives advice on how to validate desires in his lecture given in Anaheim, CA in the 90s, entitled "Judging, Feeling and Not Being Moralistic": "...The satisfaction of desire – short and long-range – is the essence of life... enjoyment is an end in itself, you do not need to justify short-range pleasure in long-range terms... why work for a long-range goal except to expand, enhance and enrich your pleasure in life... Within the framework of *rational desires* and long-range goals, seize the day and ring out of it every pleasure possible... *...integrate your emotions with your perception of reality, so that as closely as possible, you will always be doing what you want to do*, and simultaneously, you are always following reality. And the key to there being no opposition is that: *your desires follow from reality by the act of your observing the facts you shape your desires*; and your introspection follows from reality from your basic choice to live – and you approve of it – and to live means to remain in reality. If you follow you'll see that the inner and the outer are being guided by a desire based on reality, and facts that you perceive in reality. This is the real meaning of *objective values* in practical life..."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Peikoff, "Judging, Feeling and Not Being Moralistic." Recorded Lecture

## Morality as Objective Not Subjective

Rand did not, however, endorse subjectivism – just the opposite: “...but that which makes you happy, by some undefined emotional standard, is not necessarily the good.”<sup>9</sup> This expresses Rand’s commitment to objectivity (which requires a moral standard based on a metaphysically-given fundamental alternative). Her commitment to happiness and objectivity led her to utterly oppose subjectivism, or as she often called it, “*whim worship*.” Rand defined a whim as: “...a desire experienced by a person who does not know and does not care to discover its cause.”<sup>10</sup> Rand repudiates subjectivism in the quotes in Appendix 2.

## Reason Alone as Guide to Happiness

Her opposition to whim worship is not just because it is irrational but because it makes happiness impossible. “The maintenance of life and the pursuit of happiness are not two separate issues. To hold one’s own life as one’s ultimate value, and one’s own happiness as one’s highest purpose are two aspects of the same achievement. Existentially, the activity of pursuing rational goals is the activity of maintaining one’s life; psychologically, its result, reward and concomitant is an emotional state of happiness.”<sup>11</sup> So, Rand’s reasoning goes like this: happiness is a concomitant of life; you must maintain your life by your knowledge of its requirements, and since “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...”<sup>12</sup> and “basic means of survival,”<sup>13</sup> and “emotions are not tools of cognition,”<sup>14</sup> you must act by the guidance of knowledge gained by reason to be happy. Rand pays homage to rationality with the quotes in Appendix 3.

The Rand quotes in Appendix 2 imply that moral judgments should *not* be based on whims, while the quotes in Appendix 3 imply that moral judgments should not be based on even validated personal desires, but rather on reason alone because, she implies, objective moral evaluation is a type of cognition. Peikoff states, interpreting Rand, that in any “cognitive activity, feeling is set to the side—that it is not allowed to direct the course of the inquiry or affect its outcome.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, the judgment of career, love, and friends, etc., requires the input of your personal desires to achieve happiness. Sometimes Rand claims that objective moral evaluation is an exclusively cognitive activity, if so, then when judging career, love, friendship, etc., personal desires must be “set aside” from moral judgment. That would mean either judging one’s career according to one’s personal desires is outside

<sup>9</sup> Rand, *The Objectivist Ethics*, *Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 32

<sup>10</sup> Rand, *The Objectivist Ethics*, *Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 14

<sup>11</sup> Rand, *The Objectivist Ethics*, *Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 32

<sup>12</sup> Rand, *The Objectivist Ethics*, *Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 28

<sup>13</sup> Rand, *Letters of Ayn Rand: Letters to a Philosopher*, p. 556

<sup>14</sup> Rand, *The Objectivist Ethics*, *Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 32

<sup>15</sup> Peikoff, *OPAR* p. 161

the moral realm, or personal desires must be considered unnecessary guides to happiness. Thus Rand has backed herself into a corner.

If it didn't surprise you that Rand considers the sacrifice of personal desires “moral treason,” it may come as surprise that there is no moral principle in the Objectivist Ethics that can justify such a judgment. In the Objectivist Ethics there is no virtue of selfishness that necessitates the inclusion of personal desires -- not even validated personal desires for which you know and approve the cause. Instead the Objectivist Ethics considers, “reason as... one's only judge of values and only guide to action.”<sup>16</sup> If objective moral values are a type of truth, your desire for ballet music should be as relevant to determining its *objective moral value*, as your desire for “two plus two equaling four” is relevant to its *truth* -- that is, not at all. If as Rand holds, objective moral evaluation is a type of cognition, since “emotions are not tools of cognition” they cannot be tools of moral evaluation either. If as Rand holds, *objective moral values* are a type of *truth*, since personal desires are not part of the standard of *truth*, they cannot be part of an *objective standard of moral value*. So, this would mean that any evaluation whose standard of value includes personal desires would be outside the moral realm. On this view: you risk your life (like Ragnar) to pursue a dangerous career because you love it – you get no moral credit; you sacrifice your desire for a career in painting to please your mom (like Keating) – you get no moral blame. Except this was not the morality of Ayn Rand, despite what she wrote in the Objectivist Ethics.

## Rand's Dilemma

The moral requirement of pursuing one's passions was dramatized in Rand's novels and exemplified by her life. That requirement of pursuing passions might have been put into the Objectivist Ethics as a richer concept of the virtue of selfishness, but it was excluded, (presumably in the name of objectivity). But as the dramatized morality of Ayn Rand indicates, to be a sufficient guide to happiness morality must include the guidance of personal desires. Since we can't be made happy without the guidance of our personal desires, this is a dilemma because, like Rand, we *should* be aiming for both – an *objective* morality that is also a sufficient guide to *happiness*. To put Rand's dilemma another way: personal desires in morality -- you can't be objective with them -- you can't get happy without them. This is a real dilemma if you accept Rand's meta-ethical theory that moral objectivity is a type of epistemological objectivity.

The Objectivist Ethics holds that to be objective, the guidance of personal desires must be excluded from morality. Yet the morality of Ayn Rand holds that to be happy you must include the guidance of personal desires. So the Objectivist Ethics is at odds with the morality of Ayn Rand.

Some might want to maintain, nevertheless, that the Objectivist Ethics doesn't exclude a guidance role for personal desires even though the Objectivist Ethics says, “emotions are not tools of cognition” and “reason... is

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<sup>16</sup> Rand, *The Objectivist Ethics, Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 28  
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one's only judge of values and only guide to action." True, the Objectivist Ethics also recommends that you think about your personal desires, but knowing your desires doesn't, by itself, make them relevant to an objective moral evaluation, or part of an objective moral standard, or a necessary part of an objective moral value. The Objectivist Ethics does not prescribe how to validate personal desires, nor what you should do with your knowledge of them that would influence an objective moral evaluation (Rand did not include her "Pleasure Purpose Principle" in the Objectivist Ethics which Peikoff describes in a lecture as the (moral?) principle that you *should* pursue purposes that bring you pleasure).

Since the objective moral standard is thought to be a type of objective *knowledge* (of the requirements of man's life qua man), and personal desires cannot be part of the standard of truth, personal desires are therefore not part of the moral standard; such is the implication in the Objectivist Ethics. This means, for example, you could not objectively morally evaluate one moral value higher than another simply on the basis of the fact that you personally desire it more. For example, a man facing a career choice like Peter Keating, could not morally judge a career as a painter morally superior for him compared to a career as an architect, simply because he desired painting more. Similarly, one could not judge, as morally superior, listening to the ballet music they love over other classical music they are indifferent to. For those to be *moral* judgments, as opposed to "optional value" judgments, it would require that personal desires be part of the standard of moral judgment, yet in the Objectivist Ethics they are not.

If you follow Peikoff's line of reasoning about this subject, ranking alternative careers or music according to what you desire more would be considered morally optional. That is to say, both alternatives either painter, or architect, either ballet music, or classical, (taking for granted that they are all "life promoting"), would all be considered equal moral alternatives, or "optional values." Either choice would be *permitted* and you would be free to choose the one you desire more or less – getting no moral credit or blame for such choices either way. Now just suppose, all other relevant things being equal, you choose the alternative you desire *less*. That choice might sacrifice some of your happiness, but it would not be immoral according to the rational moral standard in the Objectivist Ethics. That proves that this moral standard is an insufficient guide to happiness, which is one of our points: You can't have a sufficient guide to happiness without a moral standard that includes validated personal desires. The Objectivist Ethics does not say how to include validated personal desires in the moral standard, so it can't be a sufficient guide to happiness. The morality of Ayn Rand did implicitly include personal desires in the moral standard, as A&MT and her fiction demonstrates, yet she gives no explicit guidance for how to achieve them. This proves they are different moralities.

Some may want to counter that Peikoff's advice on page six from "Judging, Feeling and Not Being Moralistic" is a method of morally validating personal values. First, despite the fact that his lecture is peppered with the words "should" and "must" implying that these are moral issues, Peikoff never states that the advice he is giving is moral advice and Rand urges us to be as precise as we can be in philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Peikoff told one of

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<sup>17</sup> Rand, Letters of Ayn Rand p. 504 "...I hold that philosophers, above all, must be as meticulously precise as it is possible to be, and I am in favor of the most rigorous "hairsplitting," where necessary—I hold that philosophy

us (John) that he does not consider the advice he gave in this lecture, on the process of validating personal desires, to be *moral* advice, i.e., the kind of advice that goes in ethics.<sup>18</sup>

## Personal Desires as Morally Epiphenomenal

How did Rand try to escape her dilemma?

When Peikoff says in the quote on page five to “*integrate your emotions with your perception of reality*” it is a bit ambiguous whether he refers to something you have to do volitionally besides thinking, or if integration with emotions happens automatically and necessarily as a by-product of thinking. Later in this quote he elaborates, “your desires follow from reality by the act of your observing the facts you shape your desires...” which seems to indicate that desires line up automatically as a result of thinking. Also that is something he says in OPAR: “...think and you shall feel.”<sup>19</sup>

In order for morality to be objective, Rand thought she had to limit moral evaluation to reasoning without the aid of personal desires, yet she seems to have known that to achieve happiness one needs to desire the moral values one achieves. She appears to have conceived of no other possible objective mental method that could control personal desires, other than reasoning. Despite the fact that she said she knew that one needs the guidance of personal desires to be happy, her theory of objectivity as rationality could not justify including them in an objective process of evaluation. However, she still needed a way to get personal desires aligned with moral values that were evaluated exclusively by reason. It appears she thought she achieved this end by assuming emotions are caused exclusively by knowledge, i.e., if you know the good you will necessarily desire the good. This would seem to save objectivity and keep morality as a sufficient guide to happiness. However, it contradicts her other idea that people could hate the good for being the good, (among other problems). Rand's meta-ethical model that emotions follow automatically from beliefs, “value judgments,” or “evaluative ideas” as Peikoff calls them, contradicts another of her meta-ethical views: that emotions come from emotional generalizations created by a process of “emotional abstraction.”<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, her argument seems to go like this: Happiness requires joy. Joy comes from the satisfaction of

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should be more precise than the strictest legal document, because much more is at stake—and I am in favor of the most technical language, to achieve such precision...”

<sup>18</sup> Following the Q&A of this talk, one of us (John) personally asked Peikoff if he thought the advice he was giving was moral advice. He vigorously disavowed the idea. So this implies that when he says personal desires are a part of an “objective value” this does not mean objective *moral* value. And when he says in a “framework of rational desires” you should not take him to mean they are a part of a *moral* standard of value.

<sup>19</sup> Peikoff, OPAR p. 229

<sup>20</sup> Rand, “Philosophy and Sense of Life,” *The Romantic Manifesto*, 37

desires. So the moral values you achieve you also need to desire in order to achieve happiness. If you knew the good you would automatically and necessarily desire the good. That would seem to solve the problem. You could reason about the good, automatically desire it, purpose to do it, achieve it and get joy from its achievement. However, there is a contradiction here, e.g., it contradicts the experience of many dieters who know that our desires do not necessarily line up with what we know is good for us.

## Rand's Blind Spot

Why does Rand exclude from the moral standard, personal desires for which you know and approve the cause? What about the possibility of a method of objective moral evaluation that includes reasoning plus evaluations that require the input of affects for which you do know and approve the cause? With respect to this alternative, Rand is silent; it is as if the possibility did not exist for her.

~ The Morality of Ayn Rand is Superior to the Objectivist Ethics ~

Rand's exclusion of personal desires from the moral standard in the Objectivist Ethics is not limited to whims, but extends to all emotions or affects, even those for which you know and approve of the cause. Peikoff elaborates on this issue:

“The above indicates the pattern of the proper relationship between reason and emotion in a man's life: reason first, emotion as a consequence. Reason is the fundamental faculty of human consciousness, the existence-oriented faculty. Emotion is a derivative, which must be treated as such. One must, therefore, begin any inquiry or undertaking with a focus on reality; i.e., one must begin with the commitment to obey reason, in every issue and at all costs. One proceeds to form conclusions, including value-judgments, accordingly (and to revise them when necessary). Then one experiences the emotions to which these conclusions lead. In this approach to life, reality and reason are given the primary position; they are regarded as one's guiding absolute, to which emotion must conform.”<sup>21</sup> Here personal desires are treated as morally epiphenomenal, like so much exhaust from the engine of reasoning, which alone does all the real work of objective moral evaluation. Personal desires are present but they have no guidance role.

This means the Objectivist Ethics has the same problem as the duty ethics: it bars all personal desires from the moral realm and leaves “the rest of man's life without any moral guidance, cutting morality off from any application to the actual problems and concerns of man's existence. Such matters as work, career, ambition, love, friendship, pleasure, happiness, values ...are regarded...as amoral, i.e., outside the province of morality.”<sup>22</sup> Because the morality of Ayn Rand has a guidance role for personal desires, while the Objectivist ethics does not,

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<sup>21</sup> Peikoff, OPAR, p. 162

<sup>22</sup> Rand, Causality Versus Duty, The Objectivist, July 1970

the morality of Ayn Rand is a better guide to happiness than the Objectivist Ethics.

## Rand's Meta-ethical Assumptions Forced Personal Desires out of Morality

So, if personal desires have a guidance role in Ayn Rand's *morality* but not in her *ethics*, how did this come to be? Personal desires could *not* have a guidance role in the Objectivist Ethics because she was logically compelled to exclude them to be internally consistent with some assumptions in her meta-ethics: 1) that *reasoning is the only possible objective mental method*; and 2) *knowledge is the only possible objective mental content*. Here is a quote from Peikoff confirming Rand's view that values are a type of knowledge or idea: "Well actually, value judgments *are a type of idea*. You say, 'Independence is good' or 'Life is good' or 'Murder is evil' *those are ideas*; they're *evaluative ideas*."<sup>23</sup> The following seems to be consistent with Rand's thinking: If moral evaluation is objective, and reasoning is the only possible objective mental process, then moral evaluation must be a type of reasoning. If moral evaluation is a type of reasoning, since emotions are not tools of cognition (i.e., not part of the standard of truth), then emotions cannot be part of an objective standard of moral value. Suppose you desire  $2+2=4$  and feel an aversion for the statement that  $2+3=4$ . Does that make the first any more true or the second any more false? No. Your desires are irrelevant to the truth. If objective moral values are a type of truth your desires in principle must be irrelevant to your objective moral values. In fact to make personal desires significant to your moral evaluations would invalidate your moral evaluations. Again this conclusion is necessitated by the premise that objective moral valuation is a type of cognition.

If you think emotions can be relevant to cognition, here is another quote from Peikoff on the role of emotions in cognition: "He must learn, then methodically observe, the difference between thought and feeling—between logic and desire—between percepts and concepts on the one hand, and hopes, wishes, hates, loves, fears on the other. By continuous self-monitoring, he must ensure that during any cognitive activity, feeling is set to the side—that it is not allowed to direct the course of the inquiry or affect its outcome."<sup>24</sup>

So Rand is cornered, if objective moral evaluation is an exclusively cognitive activity, as Rand claims it is. If you accept the premise that *reasoning is the only possible objective mental method*, you are forced, in logic, to exclude personal desires from morality. This is not only what Rand did, it is what she had to do given this premise which she accepted.

Her excluding personal desires from ethics was not because of her commitment to reason or objectivity per se; it

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<sup>23</sup> Peikoff, "Objective Communication Course" Q&A: Question: "Do ideas determine men's values, or do men's values determine men's ideas, or are ideas and values reciprocal?" Peikoff: "Well actually, value judgments *are a type of idea*. You say, "Independence is good," or 'Life is good' or 'Murder is evil' *those are ideas*; they're *evaluative ideas*."

<sup>24</sup> Peikoff, OPAR, p. 161

was because she believed moral objectivity is a *type* of epistemological objectivity. It was not that “emotions are not tools of cognition” it was that she believed *objective moral evaluation* is a *type of cognition*. It was not because she believed that moral evaluation is objective; it was because she believed that rationality is the *only possible objective mental method*. It was not because she believed that moral values are objective; it was because she believed that conceptual knowledge (or truth) is the *only possible objective mental content*. It was not because she believed the moral standard was objective; it was because she believed the moral standard was essentially rational, i.e., knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the requirements of “man's life” (qua man).

Given her theory of moral objectivity as a kind of epistemological objectivity, and since morality *is* objective (including being based on a metaphysically-given fundamental alternative), she had to exclude a guidance role for personal desires in morality. Given those premises, internal logical consistency would have compelled her to conclude that just as personal desires cannot be tools of cognition, so they cannot be tools of objective moral evaluation; just as personal desires can be no part of the standard of truth, so too they can be no part of an objective standard of moral value, or of an objective moral value, just as personal desires cannot be essential to the virtue of rationality, they cannot be essential to the virtue of selfishness.

Rand never proved that reason was the only objective mental process. She never proved that knowledge is the only possible objective mental content. She didn't even argue for these and never states these meta-ethical premises directly. Yet she must have assumed them or she would never have banished personal desire from the moral realm as she condemned Kant for doing.

But is reasoning the only possible type of objective mental method? And is knowledge the only possible type of objective mental content? These are meta-ethical questions worth revisiting as these assumptions logically forced Rand to exclude personal desires from the moral standard in the Objectivist Ethics, thus weakening the virtue of *selfishness* or *egoism*, which includes the moral pursuit of validated passionate values – which she dramatized so well in her novels, and which she criticized Kant and his ilk for leaving out of ethics.

## Conclusion

So, from the moral, dramatic, personal and psychological perspectives, pursuing validated personal desires was critical to Rand but she excluded them from her ethics. It was her meta-ethical assumption that reason is the only possible objective mental method and knowledge the only possible objective mental content that led to this. It seems her meta-ethical assumptions blinded her to the possibility of an objective process of moral evaluation that includes the use of validated personal desires.

Although reason is man's only means of knowledge, and emotions are not tools of cognition (qua standard of truth), this does not imply that objective moral evaluations must be a type of reasoning, nor objective moral values a type of knowledge. When you aim for an objective morality that is a sufficient guide to happiness and recognize that knowledge is an insufficient guide, it is time to consider expanding your concept of objectivity to

include validated personal desires. By refusing to consider doing so, we risk making objectivity a frozen abstraction, and ethics an insufficient and misleading guide to happiness.

Because of Rand's meta-ethical assumptions, she was logically forced to do what she would have *hated* to do otherwise – put herself in the same boat with Kant and other preachers of the duty ethics in banishing personal desires from a guidance role in the morality prescribed by her ethics.

Having excluded personal desires (and affects generally) from morality Objectivists have generally punted them into the field of psychology. The idea of personal objective moral values is non-existent in Rand's *theory*, and the substitutes in practice are alternatively, intrinsic authoritarian conformity, or subjective "optional values."<sup>25</sup> The consequence is that the Objectivist Ethics gives no guidance for the validation of personal desires, or sanction for their use in the process of objective moral evaluation for any of the moral values critical to people's happiness, including career, romantic love, friendship, etc. This is not to say that ethics should give specific advice on evaluating careers or friendships but it should prescribe the necessity of developing and validating personal desires as part of an objective moral virtue.

Rand's attempt to turn her morality into a single, non-contradictory ethical system, given her meta-ethical premises, was an impossible task. Her ethical "system" remains in a state of disintegration and contradiction with itself and reality. It ended up in mutually incompatible alternative systems or paradigms. This may not be apparent to those who hold Rand's morality simply as a gestalt, but for those trying to systematize Rand's ethics, they must reject at least one of Rand's valid meta-ethical pillars of *happiness*, *egoism* and *objectivity*, or be either internally contradictory or contradict empirical evidence.

In conclusion, the morality of Ayn Rand differed from the Objectivist Ethics because the Objectivist Ethics excluded a guidance role for personal desires. Rand was logically forced to do so to maintain consistency with the premises that reason is the only possible objective mental method and knowledge is the only possible objective mental content. These were unproven meta-ethical assumptions which made her ethics an insufficient and misleading guide to happiness. Consequently, the *implicit* morality of Ayn Rand, as expressed in her life and fiction, is superior to her *explicit* Objectivist Ethics – superior as a guide to happiness. To make possible a systematic, non-contradictory, unequivocal ethics prescribing an objective egoistic morality that is a sufficient guide to happiness, we should question the assumption that moral objectivity is a type of epistemological objectivity.

## Epilogue

The premises underlying Rand's meta-ethics have made it impossible in theory to integrate her three pillars of *objectivity*, *happiness* and *egoism* into a single non-contradictory system. The consequence, in practice, is that as

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<sup>25</sup> "Optional values" is a phrase Rand never used.

Objectivists have attempted to systematize Rand's theories, in the name of logical consistency, they have been logically forced into different, relatively self-consistent, mutually incompatible, schools of thought or sub-systems within the Objectivist movement with respect to meta-ethics. Each school of thought can be characterized by the priority they place on each pillar. It is as if they have a greater conscious or subconscious commitment to one or two pillars over the other(s), as if to say, "If I can't have it all, I definitely won't leave out this one." Herein, these schools are called *The Flourishers*, *The Survivalists*, and *The Syncretists*. There is another camp (led by Rand) that equivocates between some or all of the premises underlying each camp (but presumably they don't realize it) we call them the Gestaltists. Appendix 1 is a short summary of the three schools' positions, particularly how each school comes down on the relation of personal desire (egoism) and happiness to objectivity in morality.

In light of the fact that Peikoff vehemently insists that Rand created a complete and perfect system, how did Rand make such unproven meta-ethical assumptions? You may be interested to know that, according to Peikoff himself, Rand did not think she had a total systematic philosophy. The following quote is from Peikoff's 1988 question period at his lecture "Certainty and Happiness" (at Conceptual Conferences 1988 not The Ford Hall Forum):

"...It's the theory of concepts that made me disagree with Ayn Rand in *her own* identification of her self. We always would kid around, not too seriously, about what would be her place in history, and so on, I would kid around; and I would insist that she was like Plato or Aristotle and she'd say: "No, I'm just like Socrates. I have some interesting ideas but I need to find the Plato who will make a total philosophy out of my interesting ideas." She and I argued that several times. It was just a joke because who wants to be Plato, but you see what we are talking about. In my mind, the theory of concepts, when I grasped that, that's what made her Plato rather than Socrates because that was now the complete, total, final, synthesized philosophy resting on it's root – other than that it would not be..."<sup>26</sup>

If we really want to understand the morality of Ayn Rand we can't depend exclusively on her own understanding of it, as she didn't really understand her own morality as a non-contradictory whole system. She better expressed it in fiction than in non-fiction. We should induce her ethics from her fiction and life, not just try to learn it from her ethics.

Although creating an objective morality that is a sufficient guide to happiness is a difficult goal, that does not mean that it is impossible to achieve this critical aim for the first time in human history. A correct meta-ethics, including a correct model of the nature of man, life, values, happiness, the self, objectivity is of monumental importance to being happy and having a healthier culture to live in. The following quote is from Peikoff discussing why Aristotle's weak ethics (and politics) did not have the profound historical effect one might expect given the competition. Tragically and equally what he says about Aristotle can, in essence, be said of Rand.

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<sup>26</sup> Peikoff, 1988, lecture "Certainty and Happiness," Conceptual Conferences Q&A (not the Ford Hall Forum version) (this version is apparently no longer available but go to X address to hear the clip)

“...Because he was never able fully to free himself from his early Platonism, Aristotle's ethics and politics...never became fully Aristotelian, in other words, fully rational and this-worldly...

Aristotle's ethics was not strong enough to combat the Platonic and Sophistic rivals in the field. And therefor, to answer a question I get all the time, so I hope you will regard this as at least a partial answer, this deficiency of Aristotle's ethics is one of the major reasons why his philosophy did not become a major influence over all future philosophizing right away. When a philosopher's ethics is weak, no matter how many good points he has in metaphysics and epistemology, his influence on men will be significantly less because men feel the influence of ANY philosophy primarily through its ethics. That, after all, is the primary purpose of philosophy: to teach men how to live. As an analogy: if you offer men a magnificent internal combustion machine but they have no idea how to use it and there is no fuel to make it run, and the alternative is a horse and buggy which actually works – to say nothing of a mystic flying carpet if only they pay enough money and go to church – they will choose the horse and buggy or the flying carpet over the unusable internal combustion machine... You should not be too surprised therefor to learn that shortly after his death, Aristotle's philosophy went into eclipse and took many, many, many centuries to exhume...”<sup>27</sup>

This is the first in a series of articles on a new meta-ethics that could be the foundation for an objective, egoistic morality which is a sufficient guide to happiness. In these upcoming articles the following will be addressed: 1) Rand's meta-ethical pillar of *objectivity* and the introduction of a new fundamental metaphysical alternative, or fact (besides biological life), on which to ground an objective, egoistic, happiness-oriented ethics; 2) Rand's meta-ethical pillar of *happiness* and why choosing happiness as the ultimate end precludes the need for moral justification without risking subjectivity; and 3) how moral affects like romantic love, pride, and guilt can be part of an objective moral evaluation.

## Appendix 1: Objectivism's Reformation

The essence of Ayn Rand's morality was held as a gestalt by Rand and never systematized by her. After she died, since she was not there to constrain the result, those trying to systematize it were left with the task to make a non-contradictory system out of her meta-ethics. Different schools of thought developed around different priorities among the different pillars of *happiness*, *objectivity* and *egoism*. This led to a reformation in the Objectivist movement, a split into three major schools (so far) of interpretation of Rand's meta-ethical thought: the Flourishers, Survivalists, Syncretists, (also what I'm calling the Gestaltists lead by Rand who try to integrate all the pillars but having to equivocate on key terms (like life) to do it).

On *The Flourisher's* interpretation of Rand's meta-ethics and Objectivist Ethics, happiness is man's ultimate end; happiness requires the guidance of personal desires; the guidance of personal desires is in ethics, and ethics is a

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<sup>27</sup> Peikoff, Leonard. Recorded Lecture, *The History of Philosophy, Volume 1 – Founders of Western Philosophy: Thales to Hume*.

sufficient guide to happiness – all of which are correct. However, in dropping biological life and death as the fundamental alternative grounding their moral standard, they have a subjective moral standard which is a critical flaw -- the Survivalists level this criticism at them.

On *The Survivalist's* interpretation of Rand's meta-ethics and Objectivist Ethics, physical survival is the ultimate end; happiness requires the guidance of personal desires but that guidance is outside the moral realm; and morality is *not* a sufficient guide to happiness. For the Survivalist's moral blame could *not* be leveled at someone for refusing to listen to the music they loved – as Rand leveled it in (A&MT) – even if it undermined their happiness. Such a judgment would be seen as dogmatic moralizing. Instead they push personal desires into the field of psychology and offer sympathy to the happiness seeker for the fact that psychology is still in its infancy.

On *The Syncretists* interpretation of Rand's meta-ethics and Objectivist Ethics, physical survival and happiness are two aspects of the ultimate end; happiness does not require the guidance of personal desires (because right desires are *epiphenomenal*, automatic and necessary byproduct of right thinking), and morality is a sufficient guide to happiness (morality being simply a code of knowledge to guide one to survival long-range). For the Syncretists, Rand's leveling of moral treason of in A&MT is right, but for the wrong reasons. Since the men in A&MT were unhappy they must have harbored some wrong premise(s) (if only subconsciously); but since physical survival long range and happiness are concomitants, consistent Syncretists believe all old physically healthy people lived happy/flourishing, moral, rational lives: “A person cannot survive, long range, without flourishing...”<sup>28</sup> This contradicts the evidence we find in any rest home. Incidentally, a consistent Syncretist would hold that if you fully know the good, you will automatically and necessarily desire the good, which contradicts Rand's idea of the possibility that a person could hate the good for being the good.

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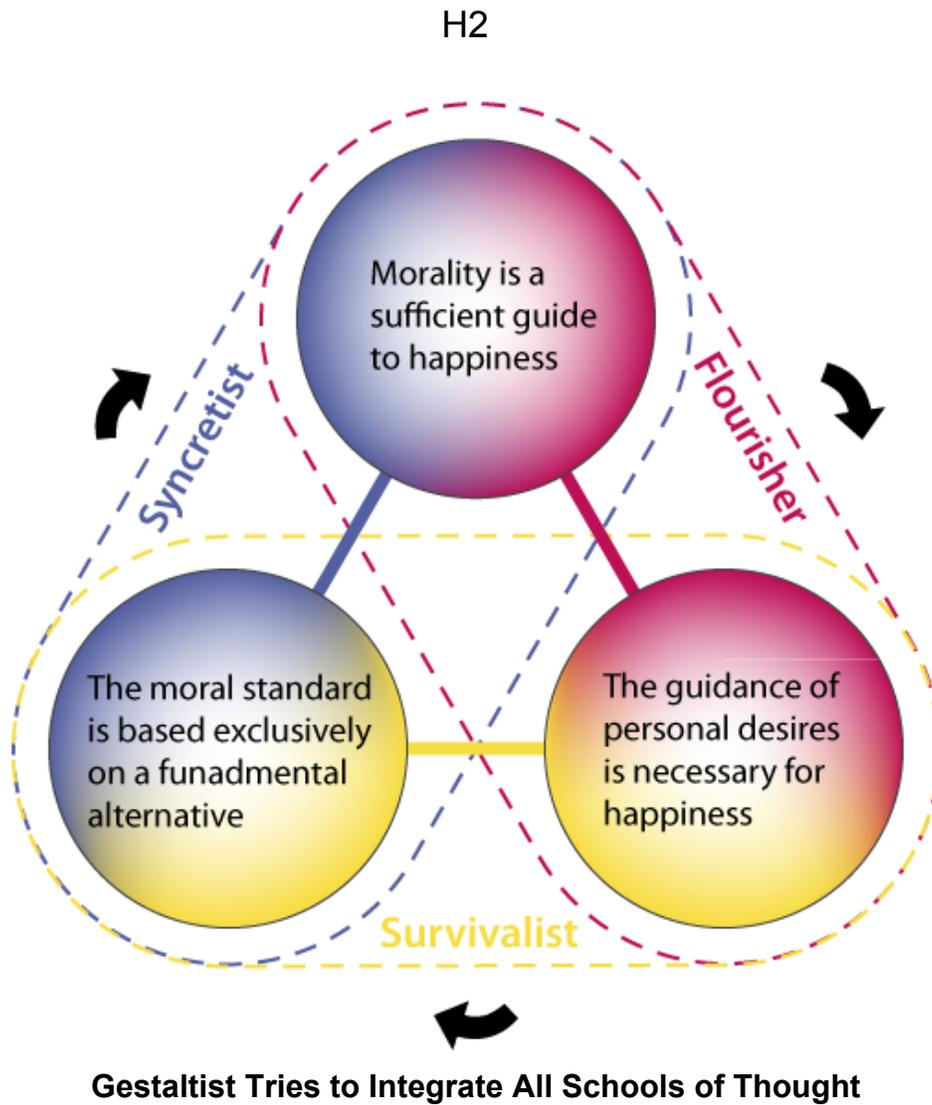
<sup>28</sup> Smith, Tara “Viable Values” p. 148

Each school (to the right) rejects all the premises in the column below it and accepts all the premises in the other two columns	Syncretists reject all premises below	Flourishers reject all premises below	Survivalists reject all premises below
Meta-ethical premises grouped by parts of morality (below), and grouped by pillar (to the right)	(E) Egoism/Selfishness Personal Desires	(O) Objectivity	(H) Happiness
1. Virtue	<b>E1: The guidance of personal desires are part of the necessary means of gaining happiness</b>	O1: Objective evaluations are sufficient evaluations to be moral	H1: Moral virtue is a sufficient virtue to achieve happiness
2. Value	E2: To be happy one needs to volitionally personally desire the values one achieves	O2: Achieving objective values are sufficient value achievements to be moral	<b>H2: Achieving moral values are sufficient values to achieve happiness</b>
3. Standard	E3: Personal desires are a necessary part of the standard of value guiding one to happiness	<b>O3: The moral standard is based exclusively on a metaphysically given fundamental alternative</b>	H3: The moral standard is a sufficient standard to guide to happiness

**Table 1**

**Table 1** shows how all three incompatible schools of thought come down differently in regard to Rand's meta-ethical pillars of *egoism*, *objectivity* and *happiness*. All nine premises below are true but no single school accepts

all nine of them. Each of the nine premises is accepted by only two out of three schools of thought and rejected by the other. There is some evidence (including quotes below) explicit or implicit that Rand supports all nine positions at times, and reject all nine premises at times.



O3

E1

**Figure 1**

Figure 1 shows, in the form of a false trichotomy, the relationships among the three logically incompatible schools of thought -- Survivalist, Flourisher, and Syncretist which believe the two premises the dotted oval encompasses. They all reject the premise their oval leaves out. This exclusion of one of the three premises is necessitated in logic if one accepts the premise that moral objectivity is a type of epistemological objectivity. The Gestaltists try to embrace all three premises and end up having to equivocate on the meaning of concept like 'life' and 'rationality' to do it. The text in the circles correspond with the text in the table as follows, starting with the top circle. top: "H2: Achieving moral values are sufficient values to achieve happiness," right: "E1: The guidance of personal desires are part of the necessary means of gaining happiness," left "O3: The moral standard is based exclusively on a metaphysically given fundamental alternative,"

Table 2 below shows differences in meta-ethical premises between each of the three schools. Note that no one school gets all the correct answers which are shown with asterisks\*.

Answers to questions consistent with each School of thought	Are personal desires part of the moral standard?	If you know the good will you necessarily desire the good?	Could a moral standard based solely on the fundamental alternative of the existence or non-existence of a certain kind of organism, be a sufficient guide to happiness?
<b>Survivalist</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No*</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Flourisher</b>	<b>Yes*</b>	<b>No*</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Syncretists</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes*</b>

\* Correct according to us.

**Table 2**

Below is a collection of Rand quotes that support each of the three schools of thought on Rand's three meta-ethical pillars.

## **The Flourishers**

### **Rand's support for the Flourishers on Objectivity**

Rand's article "Art and Moral Treason" supports the Flourishers view regarding not having a fundamental, metaphysical base for ethics, if even only inadvertently, in that Rand morally condemns two men for not pursuing their personal desires, yet Rand has no fundamental, metaphysical base from which to condemn these two men who were pursuing their bodily survival – just not their happiness.

### **Rand's support for the Flourishers on Egoism/Personal Desires**

"In a deontological [duty] theory, *all personal desires are banished from the realm of morality*; a personal desire has no moral significance... If a man wants to be honest, he deserves no moral credit; as Kant would put it, such honesty is 'praiseworthy,' but without 'moral import.'... This is the sort of theory that gives morality a bad name. A deontological (duty-centered) theory of ethics confines moral principles to a list of prescribed 'duties' and leaves the rest of man's life without any moral guidance, cutting morality off from any application to the actual problems and concerns of man's existence. Such matters as work, career, ambition, love, friendship, pleasure, happiness, values (insofar as they are not pursued as duties) are regarded by these theories as amoral, i.e., outside the province of morality. If so, then by what standard is a man to make his daily choices, or direct the course of his life?" ("Causality vs. Duty)

### **Rand's support for the Flourishers on Happiness**

"...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..." ("About the Author" Atlas Shrugged)

"...But she knew that there was no meaning in motors or factories or trains, that their only meaning was in man's enjoyment of his life, which they served — and that her swelling admiration at the sight of an achievement was for the man from whom it came, for the power and the radiant vision within him which had seen the earth as a place of enjoyment and had known that the work of achieving one's HAPPINESS was the purpose, the sanction and the meaning of life..." ("Atlas Shrugged" p. 674-5)

"...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..." ("Atlas Shrugged" Galt's Speech, p. 396)

"...His own HAPPINESS is man's only moral purpose, but only his own virtue can achieve it..." ("Atlas Shrugged" Galt's Speech, p. 939)

"...The purpose of life is HAPPINESS — and if we adopt the morality of altruism, then the man most fitted for life has the least right to it (or to its enjoyment, to happiness)..." ("The Journals of Ayn Rand" p. 283)

"...I would say: Roark was happy because he spent his life achieving the things (the values) that would make him happy, or: enacting the causes of which his happiness would be the result. And — I would add — he succeeded, because his values were rational; happiness cannot be achieved by indulging random whims or by pursuing irrational values (values which might be right for a pig, but not for a man). Therefore, I would say that Roark's goal in life was the achievement of his own HAPPINESS..." ("The Letters of Ayn Rand" (Letters to a Philosopher) p. 538)

Rand via Leonard Peikoff: "...HAPPINESS is man's — the good man's — experience of life. The achievement of this experience, writes Ayn Rand, is "the only moral purpose of one's life..." (OPAR, p. 325)

"The Objectivist ethics would tell him: your highest moral purpose is the achievement of your own HAPPINESS, your money is yours, use it to save your wife, that is your moral right and your rational,

moral choice..." (The Ethics of Emergencies, The Objectivist newsletter, Vol 2, No. 2, August, 1963, p. 5)

"...Since one's own HAPPINESS is the moral purpose of one's own life, the man who fails to achieve it because of his own default, because of his failure to fight for it, is morally guilty..."

(Check Your Premises: The Ethics of Emergencies, The Objectivist newsletter, Vol 2, No. 2, February, 1963, p. 5)

"...HAPPINESS can properly be the purpose of ethics, but not the standard. The task of ethics is to define man's proper code of values and thus to give him the means of achieving HAPPINESS..." ("The Objectivist Ethics" p. 33)

"...But if they get the slightest suspicion of what we are to each other, they will have you on a torture rack — I mean, physical torture — before my eyes, in less than a week. I am not going to wait for that. At the first mention of a threat to you, I will kill myself and stop them right there..." Why would he kill himself unless HAPPINESS was his ultimate end and not life? ("Atlas Shrugged" Galt to Dagny p.1001)

"...And my happiness needs no higher aim to vindicate it. My HAPPINESS is not the means to any end. It is the end. It is its own goal. It is its own purpose." ("Anthem" Chapter 11)

## **The Survivalists**

### **Rand's support for the Survivalists on Objectivity**

"A man who is run by emotions is like a man who is run by a computer whose print-outs he cannot read. He does not know whether its programming is true or false, right or wrong, whether it's set to lead him to success or destruction, whether it serves his goals or those of some evil, unknowable power. He is blind on two fronts: blind to the world around him and to his own inner world, unable to grasp reality or his own motives, and he is in chronic terror of both. Emotions are not tools of cognition..." ("Philosophy who needs it")

"Today, as in the past, most philosophers agree that the ultimate standard of ethics is whim (they call it "arbitrary postulate" or "subjective choice" or "emotional commitment")—and the battle is only over the question of whose whim: one's own or society's or the dictator's or God's. Whatever else they may disagree about, today's moralists agree that ethics is a subjective issue and that the three things barred from its field are: reason—mind—reality. ("The Objectivist Ethics")

"...Without an ultimate goal or end, there can be no lesser goals or means... It is only an ultimate goal, an end in itself, that makes the existence of values possible. Metaphysically, LIFE is the only phenomenon that is an end

in itself: a value gained and kept by a constant process of action..." ("The Objectivist Ethics" p. 17)

"...Man's LIFE is the standard of morality, but your own life is its purpose..." ("Atlas Shrugged" p. 932)

"...Since the standard man's life is derived from the nature of values, from the fact that only life makes values possible (that is: only the nature of a living organism, only the requirements of an organism's life make the existence of values possible) — to choose any value, other than one's own LIFE, as the ultimate purpose of one's actions is to be guilty of a contradiction and of the fallacy of the "stolen concept." Do you remember the answer you gave to a student in your seminar, with which I agreed most enthusiastically? You said that one cannot ask: "Why should I be rational?" — because by accepting a "why" one has already accepted reason, because "why" is a concept belonging to rationality. Well, on the same grounds, by the same logic, one cannot ask: "Why should I choose my own life as my ultimate value?" — because one has already accepted it by accepting the concept "value," because the concept "value" has no other source, base, meaning or possibility of existing..." ("The Letters of Ayn Rand," p. 562)

"...The Objectivist ethics holds man's life as the standard of value — and his own LIFE as the ethical purpose of every individual man..." ("The Virtue of Selfishness" p. 27)

"...The Objectivist ethics holds man's life as the standard of value — and his own LIFE as the ethical purpose of every individual man..." ("The Objectivist Ethics" p. 27)

"...My morality, the morality of reason, is contained in a single axiom: existence exists—and in a single choice: to live." ("Galt's Speech" "Atlas Shrugged")

### **Rand's support for the Survivalists on Egoism/Personal Desires**

“In choosing his goals (the specific values he seeks to gained and/or keep), a rational man is guided by his thinking (by a process of reason) – not by his feelings or desires.”

“Many people, particularly today, claim that man cannot live by logic alone, that there’s the emotional element of his nature to consider, and that they rely on the guidance of their emotions. Well, . . . the joke is on . . . them: man’s values and emotions are determined by his fundamental view of life. The ultimate programmer of his subconscious is philosophy—the science which, according to the emotionalists, is impotent to affect or penetrate the murky mysteries of their feelings...

“He must learn, then methodically observe, the difference between thought and feeling—between logic and desire—between percepts and concepts on the one hand, and hopes, wishes, hates, loves, fears on the other. By continuous self-monitoring, he must ensure that during any cognitive activity, feeling is set to the side—that it is not allowed to direct the course of the inquiry or affect its outcome.”

“Emotions are not tools of cognition.” (The Objectivist Ethics)

“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...” (emphasis ours, The Objectivist Ethics)

### **Rand's support for the Survivalists on Happiness**

“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.”

“Happiness is not to be achieved at the command of emotional whims. Happiness is not the satisfaction of whatever irrational wishes you might blindly attempt to indulge.”

“...that which makes you happy, by some undefined emotional standard, is not necessarily the good.” (“The Objectivist Ethics”)

“...Man's *LIFE* is the standard of morality, but your own life is its purpose...” (“Atlas Shrugged” p. 932)

## **The Syncretists**

### **Rand's support for the Syncretists on Objectivity**

“...Man's life is the standard of morality, but your own *LIFE* is its purpose. If existence on earth is your goal, you must choose your actions and values by the standard of that which is proper to man — for the purpose of preserving, fulfilling and enjoying the irreplaceable value which is your life. (“Atlas Shrugged” Galt's Speech)

“...To hold one's own *LIFE* as one's ultimate value, and one's happiness as one's highest purpose are two aspects of the same achievement...” (“The Objectivist Ethics” p. 32)

“...Reason — Purpose — Self-esteem. Reason, as his only tool of knowledge — Purpose, as his choice of the happiness which that tool must proceed to achieve — self-esteem, as his inviolate certainty that his mind is competent to think and his person is worthy of happiness, which means: is worthy of *LIVING*...” (“Atlas Shrugged” Galt's Speech p. 932)

"...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. happiness was the responsibility you dreaded, it required the kind of rational discipline you did not value yourself enough to assume — and the anxious staleness of your days is the monument to your evasion of the knowledge that there is no moral substitute for happiness, that there is no more despicable coward than the man who deserted the battle for his joy, fearing to assert his right to *EXISTENCE*, lacking the courage and the loyalty to *LIFE* of a bird or a flower reaching for the sun..." ("Atlas Shrugged" Galt's Speech p. 974)

"...What is the purpose of man's survival? Happiness. Whose happiness? his own. If man's survival is made the means to some end and if at any point this end [conflicts with] his survival, he would have to be motivated by self-destruction. Therefore, the placing of any goal as the standard above *SURVIVAL* is evil. If man is not to *SURVIVE* for his own happiness but for someone else's — then, if the claims of this other interfered with his own happiness, he would have to survive in suffering. ("The Moral Basis of individualism," The Journals of Ayn Rand p. 287)

"...Man must choose his actions, values and goals by the standard of that which is proper to man — in order to achieve, maintain, fulfill and enjoy that ultimate value, that end in itself, which is his own *LIFE*..." (The Objectivist Ethics" p. 27)

### **Rand's support for the Syncretists on Egoism/Personal Desires**

"If you achieve that which is the good by a rational standard of value, it will necessarily make you happy..." (Rand, The Objectivist Ethics, The Virtue of Selfishness, p. 32)

"The truth is: think and you shall feel." Peikoff: (OPAR p. 229)

"...Integrate your emotions with your perception of reality, so that as closely as possible, you will always be doing what you want to do, and simultaneously, you are always following reality. And the key to there being no opposition is that: your desires follow from reality by the act of your observing the facts you shape your desires." Peikoff "Judging, Feeling and Not Being Moralistic" Lecture 2

### **Rand's support for the Syncretists on Happiness**

"If you achieve that which is the good by a rational standard of value, it will necessarily make you happy..." (Rand, The Objectivist Ethics, The Virtue of Selfishness, p. 32)

"...Man's life is the standard of morality, but your own life is its purpose. If existence on earth is your goal, you must choose your actions and values by the standard of that which is proper to man — for the purpose of preserving, *FULFILLING* and *ENJOYING* the irreplaceable value which is your life. ("Atlas Shrugged" Galt's Speech)

"...To hold one's own life as one's ultimate value, and one's *HAPPINESS* as one's highest purpose are two aspects of the same achievement..." ("The Objectivist Ethics" p. 32)

"...Reason — Purpose — Self-esteem. Reason, as his only tool of knowledge — Purpose, as his choice of the *HAPPINESS* which that tool must proceed to achieve — self-esteem, as his inviolate certainty that his mind is competent to think and his person is worthy of *HAPPINESS*, which means: is worthy of living..." ("Atlas Shrugged" Galt's Speech p. 932)

"...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. *HAPPINESS* was the responsibility you dreaded, it required the kind of rational discipline you did not value yourself enough to assume — and the anxious staleness of your days is the monument to your evasion of the knowledge that there is no moral substitute for *HAPPINESS*, that there is no more despicable coward than the man who deserted the battle for his *JOY*, fearing to assert his right to existence, lacking the courage and the loyalty to life of a bird or a flower reaching for the sun..." ("Atlas Shrugged" Galt's Speech p. 974)

"...What is the purpose of man's survival? *HAPPINESS*. Whose happiness? his own. If man's survival is made the means to some end and if at any point this end [conflicts with] his survival, he would have to be motivated by self-destruction. Therefore, the placing of any goal as the standard above survival is evil. If man is not to survive for his own *HAPPINESS* but for someone else's — then, if the claims of this other interfered with his own *HAPPINESS*, he would have to survive in suffering. ("The Moral Basis of individualism," The Journals of Ayn Rand p. 287)

"...Man must choose his actions, values and goals by the standard of that which is proper to man — in order to achieve, maintain, fulfill and *ENJOY* that ultimate value, that end in itself, which is his own life..." (The Objectivist Ethics" p. 27)

## **Appendix 2: Quotes Where Rand Repudiates Subjectivism**

"Happiness is not to be achieved at the command of emotional whims. Happiness is not the satisfaction of whatever irrational wishes you might blindly attempt to indulge." (Atlas Shrugged, Part 3: Chapter 7)

“Today, as in the past, most philosophers agree that the ultimate standard of ethics is whim (they call it “arbitrary postulate” or “subjective choice” or “emotional commitment”)—and the battle is only over the question of whose whim: one’s own or society’s or the dictator’s or God’s. Whatever else they may disagree about, today’s moralists agree that ethics is a subjective issue and that the three things barred from its field are: reason—mind—reality.” (The Objectivist Ethics, VOS p. 15)

“A man who is run by emotions is like a man who is run by a computer whose print-outs he cannot read. He does not know whether its programming is true or false, right or wrong, whether it’s set to lead him to success or destruction, whether it serves his goals or those of some evil, unknowable power. He is blind on two fronts: blind to the world around him and to his own inner world, unable to grasp reality or his own motives, and he is in chronic terror of both. Emotions are not tools of cognition...” (Ayn Rand Letter, Volume 3, Number 8, 1974)

### **Appendix 3: Rand Says Guidance by Reason-Only, Not Even Validated Emotions**

“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...” (emphasis ours) (The Objectivist Ethics, VOS p. 27)

“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.” (Atlas Shrugged, About the Author)

“In choosing his goals (the specific values he seeks to gain and/or keep), a rational man is guided by his thinking (by a process of reason) – not by his feelings or desires.” (The “Conflicts” of Men's Interests)

“Many people, particularly today, claim that man cannot live by logic alone, that there’s the emotional element of his nature to consider, and that they rely on the guidance of their emotions. Well...the joke is on...them: man’s values and emotions are determined by his fundamental view of life. The ultimate programmer of his subconscious is philosophy—the science which, according to the emotionalists, is impotent to affect or penetrate the murky mysteries of their feelings...” (The Ayn Rand Letter, Vol. 3, Number 8, 1974, “Philosophy Who Needs It?”)

“He must learn, then methodically observe, the difference between thought and feeling—between logic and desire—between percepts and concepts on the one hand, and hopes, wishes, hates, loves, fears on the other. By continuous self-monitoring, he must ensure that during any cognitive activity, feeling is set to the side—that it is not allowed to direct the course of the inquiry or affect its outcome.” (OPAR p. 161)

“Emotions are not tools of cognition.” (The Ayn Rand Letter, Vol. 3, Number 8, 1974, “Philosophy Who Needs It?”)

Since joy of this kind involves the achievement of values, it demands *values* (as against whims); a passion to attain goals one is convinced are right (as against uncertainty about goals that are arbitrary); in a word, purpose (as against drifting).” (Peikoff, OPAR p. 338)

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