

# **Moral Thinking: An Introduction To Values And Ethics**

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**Lecture -14**

## **Reading of Ayn Rand's "The Virtue of Selfishness"**

Hello everyone. So we are continuing the session, the closed textual reading of the text at hand, the objective aesthetics by Ayn Rand. This is the second and concluding part of it, as described earlier. This is a part of module 2. But this is only for people, who would like a closed reading of the text. In case, you would like to just stick with the basic outlines and the concepts, this textual reading need not be a part of your curriculum.

However, if you are, and I recommend, if you want to understand, how to closely read a text, develop your reactions to a text. It is a good idea, to hold your patience, and go through this reading, and which we do together. So basically, I do it soliloquy, and I imagine you there, and have reactions that come along, as I read. And, these are reactions that generate, only when you do a closed reading.

So, I hope it is of some benefit to you. And now, let us continue with, where we stopped off in the last reading, on page 21, as the difference between, standard and purpose. Now, here we find that, the author makes a difference, terminological clarity, which helps to make the broader argument. In my style of reading, I value, terminological clarity. But, I do not focus too much on it.

Your style might differ. Typically, Analytic Philosophers, or a school of philosophy called, Analytic Philosophy, are the ones, who are very concerned about, the tools of the exercise. So, the conceptual tools, or the defining the terms of one's argument, as crucial to almost determining one's argument. So, there are various ways to read, and definitely, there is no one perfect way to read. You need to discover, your own style of reading, what kind of close reading, you would do.

This is one sample, I present my sample. You can develop your own sample, but you too have a close reading on that. Okay. So, let us start on, from where we ended in the last reading. The yellow highlighted section, that you can see here.

So, the difference between standard and purpose, in this context, is as follows. A standard is an abstract principle, that serves as a measurement, or a gauge to guide a man's choice, in the achievement of a concrete specific purpose. That which is required for the survival of man-quo-man, is an abstract principle, that applies to every individual man. The task of applying this principle, to concrete specific purpose. The purpose of living a life, proper to a rational being, belongs to every individual man, and the life he has to live, is his own.

So, here is a terminological difference between standard and purpose. Not very crucial to the big picture, but to bring clarity in how, she distinguishes between standard and purpose. Man must choose his actions, values, goals, by the standard of that, which is proper to man. In order to achieve, maintain, fulfil, and enjoy that ultimate value, that end in itself, which is his own life. Value is that, which one acts or gains to keep.

Virtue is the act, by which one gains, and or keeps it. The three cardinal values of Objectivist Ethics, the three values, which together are the means to, and the realisation of one's ultimate value, one's own life, are Reason, Purpose, Self-esteem, with their three corresponding virtues, Rationality, Productiveness, and Pride. So, here is where, a crucial claim of the paper is being advanced over here, that what are the cardinal virtues, and what are the values, which are the goals, and virtue as the act, by which one reaches that. So, what are the values, and the corresponding virtues, that the Objectivist Ethics highlights. And those are, you see, Reason, Purpose, Self-esteem.

These three, and they come from the corresponding virtues of, Rationality, Productiveness, and Pride. Now continuing, productive work is the central purpose of a rational man's life. The central value, that integrates and determines, the hierarchy of all his other values. Reason is the source, the precondition of his productive work. Pride is the result.

Rationality is man's basic virtue, the source of all other virtues. Man's basic vice, the source of all evils, is the act of the unfocusing mind. So, human beings basic virtue, is now coming out to be, the claim is rationality. Not kindness, not empathy, not emotion, not altruism, but rationality. Rationality as the source, from which everything else comes into being.

And thereby, what is the basic vice, is not selfishness or wickedness, but not being focused, unfocusing one's mind, as she talks about it. Right. Okay. So, what is unfocusing his mind. The suspension of his consciousness, which is not blindness, but the refusal to see.

Not ignorance, but the refusal to know. Irrationality is the rejection of the man's means of survival. And therefore, a commitment to a course of blind destruction, that which is anti-mind, is anti-life. So, it is not the lack of knowledge, but the refusal to know. It is not the suspension of his consciousness, which is not blindness, but the refusal to see.

That is the trouble. So, when one does not exercise the choice, or exercises the choice, not to focus. 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. It means, one's total commitment to a state of full conscious awareness, to the maintenance of a full mental focus, in all issues, in all choices, in all of one's waking hours. It means, a commitment to the fullest perception of reality, within one's power, and to the constant active expansion of one's perception, that is of one's knowledge.

It means, a commitment to the reality of one's existence. That is, to the principle that, all of one's goals, values, and actions, take place in reality. And therefore, that one must never place any value or consideration, whatsoever, above one's perception of reality. It means, a commitment to the principle that, all of one's convictions, values, goals, desires, and actions, must be based on, derived from, chosen and validated by, a process of thought, as precise and scrupulous, a process of thought, directed by, as ruthlessly strict an application of logic, as one's fullest capacity permits. It means, one's acceptance of the responsibility of forming one's own judgements, and of living by the work of one's own mind, which is the virtue of independence.

It means that, one must never sacrifice one's convictions, to the opinions or wishes of others, which is the virtue of integrity. That one must never attempt to fake reality in any manner, which is the virtue of honesty. That one must never seek or grant the unearned and undeserved, neither in matter nor in spirit, which is the virtue of justice. So, if you see here, independence, integrity, honesty, and justice. These are the four crucial virtues, that the author talks about.

And, you can connect it with the lived experience. Look at the last one. The notion of justice is, never to seek or grant the unearned. So, the whole notion of dole, the whole notion of subsidy, is suspect, is a question, is something deplorable. And, if you look at the connect the notion of copyrights and patents, that an idea is not universal.

An idea that has been created, or an idea that has been actioned by somebody, due regard has to be given to that person. Neither should that person grant, nor should others seek the unearned. So, if somebody has worked on an idea, developed it into an application, in whichever field, be it music, be it technology, one deserves the ownership

of that. And, the justice is, when we do not infringe upon that sense of ownership. One must never sacrifice one's convictions to the opinions of others.

That means, integrity. That is what, they are talking about. What is independence for them, is not to be servile in one's judgement. To be convinced, only when one is convinced. Not to be convinced, because of authority or testimony. So, if you can read, a strong emphasis on the individual, and an individual conception is what is being relied on.

One must never attempt to fake reality in any manner, which is the virtue of honesty. That means, one must not get away by telling tales or stories, which do not correlate. So, it is very essential that, we do not slip into jargon, we do not create a web of words, that do not connect to the world out there. The world out there, is our final answer manual, to which we should be connected, and which will give us the feedback, whether we were right or not.

Now, I continue. It means that, one must never desire effects without causes. And, that one must never enact a cause, without assuming full responsibility of its effects. That one must never act like a zombie. What is a zombie. That is, without knowing one's purposes and motives.

That one must never make any decisions, form any convictions, or seek any values, out of context. That is, apart from, or against the total integrated sum of one's knowledge. And, above all, that one must never seek to get away with contradictions. It means, the rejection of any form of Mysticism. That is, any claim to some non-sensory, non-rational, non-definable, supernatural source of knowledge.

It means, commitment to reason, not in sporadic fits, or selected issues, or in special emergencies, but as a permanent way of life. So, here, what is the author reacting to. That is also, what you have to infer. You have to unearth, the reaction is to Mysticism. The reaction is to religion, based on revelation.

That well, where we take something for granted, without ourselves understanding it, but just by the power of testimony. That because, a great person, or who is regarded as great, has said so, or because it is in a holy book, therefore I believe it. That is what, she is protesting against. And, there is no sphere of life, that is suspended from this check of rationality. So, any non-sensory, non-rational, non-definable, supernatural source of knowledge, has to be discarded.

Now, coming to the core of the Objectivist Ethics, and what is it, that we value. The

virtue of productiveness, is the recognition of the fact, that productive work is the process by which, man's mind sustains his life. The process that, sets man free of the necessity to adjust himself to his background, as all animals do, and give him the power to adjust his background to himself. Productive work is the road of man's unlimited achievement, and calls upon the highest attributes of his character. His creative ability, his ambitiousness, his self-assertiveness, his refusal to bear uncontested disasters, his dedication to the goal of reshaping the earth, in the image of his values.

Productive work does not mean, the unfocused performance of the motions of some job. It means consciously chosen pursuit of a productive career, in any line of a rational endeavour, great or modest, on any level of ability. It is not the degree of man's ability, nor the scale of his work, that is ethically relevant here, but the fullest and most purposeful use of his mind. The virtue of pride is the recognition of the fact, that as man must produce the physical values he needs to sustain his life, so he must acquire the values of character, that make his life worth sustaining. That as, man is being of self-made wealth, so he is a being of self-made soul.

This is from, *Atlas Shrugged*, her other book. The virtue of pride can best be described, by the term of moral ambitiousness. So, productivity is important. And, productivity does not mean, fake productivity. That is something, that one produces on its own. And, if you would look at it, in the capitalist world order, production and productivity is seen as significant, to give meaning in life, to be productive in a day.

Imagine, our day-to-day vocabulary uses the word productive, as such a venerable word. And, that is from a source, that comes from this kind of thinking. Now, after productivity, she talks about the virtue of pride. The virtue of pride can best be described by the term, moral ambitiousness. It means that, one must earn the right to hold oneself, as one's own highest value, by achieving one's own moral perfection.

Which one achieves, by never accepting any code of irrational virtues, impossible to practice. And, by never failing to practice the virtues, one knows to be rational. By never accepting an unearned guilt, and never earning any, or if one has earned it, never leaving it uncorrected. By never resigning oneself passively, to any flaws in one's character. By never placing any concern, wish, fear, or mood of the moment, above the reality of one's own self-esteem.

And, above all, it means one's rejection of the role of a sacrificial animal. The rejection of any doctrine, that preaches self-emoliation, as a moral virtue or duty. So, here the emphasis is on, rejection of anything, that one has not arrived at. So, unearned guilt, or if one has earned a guilt, one has to correct it. So, this is about, I would relate it to the

claim of man, or humans being in the fallen state, that we need to be guilty of our existence, and we need to continuously repay ourselves.

May be from another religious perspective, to be born with a baggage of karma, for which we would wish to neutralise it, or compensate it. So, this sense of fundamental guilt, that many religious practices embody us, or push us into believing, is something that, Ayn Rand and the Objectivist Ethics is arguing against. So, now to continue. The basic social principle of the Objectivist Ethics is that, just as life is an end in itself, so every living human being is an end in himself.

Not the means to the ends, or the welfare of others. And therefore, that man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others, nor sacrificing others to himself. To live for this own sake means, that the achievement of his own happiness, is man's highest moral purpose. Well. In this, you can see the foundations of Individualism, which is very crucial to forming your Capitalist Ethos, or the Objectivist Ethics Ethos.

Capitalist is a word, easier for me to utter. That is why, I use it frequently. But, Capitalism is only the economic model of the Objectivist Ethics. So, when I say Capitalism, please also do understand it, in the broader picture of the Objectivist Ethics. So, just as we hold life as an end in itself, every living being also is special enough to be an end in himself, or herself, and not to play a cog in the machine. Therefore, man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others, nor sacrificing others to himself.

So, that sense of pride, that sense of independence, is to be valued. And that, if you can connect, leads to the foundation of Individualism, in this Philosophy of living. In psychological terms, the issue of man's survival does not confront his consciousness, as an issue of life or death, but as an issue of happiness or suffering. Happiness is the successful state of life.

Suffering is the warning signal of failure of death. Just as, pleasure pain mechanism of man's body, is an automatic indicator of his body's welfare or injury, a barometer of its basic alternative, life or death. So, the emotional mechanism of man's consciousness, is geared to perform the same function as a barometer, that registers the same alternative, by means of two basic emotions, joy or suffering. Emotions are the automatic results of man's value judgements, integrated by his subconscious emotions, or estimates of that, which furthers man's values, or threatens them. That which for him, or against him.

That which is for him, or against him. Lightning calculators, giving him the sum of his profit or loss. But while, the standard of value operating the physical pleasure pain

mechanism of man's body is automatic and innate, determined by the nature of his body, the standard of value operating his emotional mechanism is not. Since man has no automatic knowledge, he can have no automatic values. Since he has no innate ideas, he can have no innate value judgements.

So, here is a clear denial, that we are free. Either, we see it as a ability, or we see it as a burden. But we are free, and we have to exercise our choice. So, unlike plants and animals, there is no automatic knowledge, and there is no automatic mechanism in us. There are no innate ideas. Now, that is also very significant philosophical position being taken, that we have no innate ideas.

Schools of philosophy also differ. For example, rationalism would hold that, we have innate ideas. But that is another argument. But anyway, this exposes the premises of the argument, that the Objectivist Ethics are holding. Man is born with an emotional mechanism, just as he is born with a cognitive mechanism.

But at birth, both are Tabula Rasa. Tabula Rasa, as in a blank slate, made famous by Descartes argument. It is man's cognitive faculty, his mind, that determines the content of both. Man's emotional mechanism is like an electronic computer, which his mind has to programme. And, the programming consists of the values, his mind chooses. But since, the work of man's mind is not automatic, his values like all his premises, are the product, either of his thinking, or of his evasions.

Man chooses his values, by a conscious process of thought, or accepts them by default, by subconscious associations, on faith, on someone's authority, by some form of social osmosis, or blind imitation. Emotions are produced by man's premises, held consciously or subconsciously, explicitly or implicitly. So, emotions are a consequence of the value systems, that we hold. And, they are like feedback mechanisms and indicators, whether we are staking, or being true to our values, that we hold. Man has no choice about his capacity to feel that, something is good for him, or evil.

But, what he will consider good or evil, what will give him joy or pain, what he will love or hate, desire or fear, depends on the standard of value. So, again denying here, that there is no automatic way of knowing. And, feelings are not fundamental, to determine what is right or wrong. Once, we have determined our values, emotions only tell us, whether we are being true to it or not. If he chooses irrational values, he switches his emotional mechanism, from the role of his guardian, to the role of his destroyer.

The irrational is the impossible. It is that, which contradicts the facts of reality. Facts cannot be altered by a wish, but they can destroy the wisher. If a man desires and pursues

contradictions, if he wants to have his cake, and eat it too, he disintegrates his consciousness. He turns his inner life into a civil war of blind force, engaged in dark, incoherent, pointless, meaningless conflicts, which incidentally is the inner state of most people today. Ironically, this is written something, may be over, almost half a century back.

But yet, or may be over half a century back. But yet, it still remains true, that when we have self-contradictory desires, we are bound to an life of inner turmoil. And, especially when the external world out there, especially in the more affluent parts of the world, and societies, buffers the unhappy consequences, or the difficult consequences of wrong decisions being taken, and insulates the person, who has taken those wrong decisions, is in a way encouraging people, into a life of inner turmoil. Happiness is that state of consciousness, which proceeds from the achievement of one's values. If a man values productive work, his happiness is the measure of success, in the service of his life. But, if a man values destruction like a sadist, or self-torture like a masochist, or life beyond the grave like a mystic, or mindless kicks like the driver of a hot rod car, his alleged happiness is the measure of his success, in the service of his own destruction.

So, this is crucial, that happiness is not a primary. Happiness is the state of consciousness, which proceeds from achievement of one's values. Values are primary. So, the driver of a hot rod car, or people you have seen, crash driving on the road, or doing stunts on the road, bikers doing stunts on the road, that gives them happiness. There is a competition between these, true and stunt riders, they choose a time of the day, or night, in a desolate highway, to practice their own stunts. And, they are putting their lives in a lot of risk, they are not being trained for it.

This is not for professional stunt drivers. But, these are people, who are looking for that thrill. And, in all societies, you can find people in the boundary, who are looking for these thrills. And, they get happiness out of, reaching that level of thrill.

So, because they get happiness, it does not make it right. That is the claim here. They get happiness, but because, they have chosen something, and they are meeting that. So, happiness is the, because something is giving you happiness, does not make it right. Happiness is not a primary. So, what you choose, and when you are reaching that, that is what gives you happiness.

So, what you choose is very crucial. It must be added, that the emotional state of all those irrationalists, cannot be properly designated as happiness, or even as pleasure. It is merely a moment's relief, from their chronic state of terror. Right. So, all these stunt riding, or sadism, masochism, that we talk about, that she does not even dignify it, by



calling it as happiness.

Rather, it is their moment's relief, from a chronic state of terror. A general unhappy life, where this seems to be a moment's relief. Neither life, nor happiness, can be achieved, by the pursuit of irrational whims. Just as, man is free to attempt to survive by any random means, as a parasite, as a moocher, or a looter, but not free to succeed at it, beyond the range of the moment. So, he is free to see his happiness, in any irrational fraud, any whim, any delusion, any mindless escape from reality. But not free to succeed at it, beyond the range of the moment, not to escape the consequences.

I quote from Galt's speech, happiness is a state of non-contradictory joy. A joy without penalty or guilt. A joy, that does not clash with any of your values, and does not work, for your own destruction. Happiness is possible, only to a rational man. The man, who desires nothing but rational goals, seeks nothing but rational values, and finds joy in nothing but rational actions.

The maintenance of life, and the pursuit of happiness, are not two separate issues. To hold one's 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, the result, reward, and con-commitment, is an emotional state of happiness. It is by experiencing happiness, that one lives one's life, in any hour, year, or the whole of it. And, when one experiences the kind of pure happiness, that is an end in itself, the kind that makes one think, this is worth living for, what one is greeting, and affirming in emotional terms, is the metaphysical fact, that life is an end in itself.

So, rational values are important. And, chasing these rational values are important. Now, this very much can be seen as, contradicting or questioning, what modern day, say postmoderns, as they are called, would be questioning, that if I find my happiness, in building a sandcastle, and then destroying it, and which no way adds to my life, something that gives me, innate happiness, is something that, where they will not, or severely disagree with what, the Objectivist Ethics claims. So, I invite you to, or provoke you to, go ahead and think of, modern day phenomenon, the lives that we inhabit, which are in contradiction, to the claims, that the author is making here. But, the relationship of a cause to effect, cannot be reversed. It is only accepting man's life as one's primary, and by pursuing the rational values, it requires that, one can achieve happiness. Not by taking happiness, as some undefined irreducible primary, and then attempting to live by its guidance.

If you achieve that, which is good by a rational standard of value, it will necessarily

make you happy. That which makes you happy, by some undefined emotional standard, is not necessarily the good. To take whatever makes one happy, as a guide to action means, to be guided by nothing but, one's emotional whims. Emotions are not tools of cognition, to be guided by whims.

This is crucial, that emotions are not tools of cognition. But, to be guided by whims, by desires, whose source, nature, and meaning, one does not know, is to turn oneself into a blind robot, operated by unknowable demons. By one's stale evasions, a robot knocking its stagnant brains out against the walls of reality, which it refuses to see. Well, this is subtlety, is not the style of Ayn Rand. And, she almost cruelly, mercilessly, ridicules the Emotivists, by saying, if you are looking, do whatever makes you happy.

That is quite a, in contemporary phrase today, that well, do whatever gives you happiness. So, she strongly disagrees with that. Do whatever gives you happiness, is like leaving your life's rudder to chance, and to drive wherever you wish to go. But, you want to do something else. Emotions are not tools of cognition.

Because, if you surrender to emotions, then you are surrendering to whims. So, and she compares it, to the notion of the robot. This is the fallacy, inherent in Hedonism. Hedonism, where pleasure is the standard of, what is right. In any variant of Ethical Hedonism, personal or social, individual or collective, 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.

To declare, as the Ethical Hedonists do, that the proper value is, whatever gives you pleasure, is to declare that, the proper value is, whatever you happen to value, which is an act of intellectual and philosophical abdication. An act which merely proclaims the futility of Ethics, and invites all men to play, it reduces wild. So, whatever you happen to value is valuable, is not the way to go. There is a way, a rational way of arriving, at what is worth valuing. The Philosophers who attempted to devise an allegedly rational code of Ethics, gave mankind nothing but a choice of whims.

The selfish pursuit of one's own whims, such as Ethics of Neetze, or selfless service to the whims of others, such as the Ethics of Bentham, Mill, Comte, and all Social Hedonists. Whether they allowed man to include his own whims, among the millions of others, or advised him to turn himself into a totally selfless shmoo, that seeks to be eaten by others. Okay. Here, you can get the tone, the almost ridiculing aggressive tone of Ayn Rand's writing, where she strongly critiques. When, we expect human beings to work, either on their whims, or their own whims, or social whims, or the whims of some thinkers, but not to work from self-enlightenment.

So, she is asking that, one tries to self-enlighten, to work on their values, rather than inheriting one. When a desire, regardless of its nature or cause, is taken as an ethical primary, and the gratification of any and all desire is taken as an ethical goal, such as the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the typical Utilitarian Ethos. Men have no choice, but to hate, fear, and fight one another, because their desires and their interests will necessarily clash. If desire is the ethical standard, then one man's desire to produce, and another man's desire to rob him, have equal validity. One man's desire to be free, and another man's desire to enslave him, have equal ethical validity. One man's desire to be loved, and admired for his virtues, and another man's desire for undeserved love, and unearned admiration, have equal ethical validity.

And if the frustration of any desire constitutes a sacrifice, then a man who owns an automobile, and is robbed of it, is being sacrificed. But so is the man, who wants or aspires to an automobile, which the owner refuses to give him. And, these two sacrifices have equal ethical status. If so, then man's only choice is to rob, or to be robbed, to destroy, or to be destroyed, to sacrifice others, to any desire of his own, or to sacrifice himself, to any desire of others.

Then, man's only ethical alternative is to be a sadist, or a masochist. So, this reminds me of, looking at the taxation system. Now, if you are a hard core capitalist, you would look at the taxation system, especially when you tax the rich, to subsidise the poor, as a kind of moral cannibalism. And, philosophers like Nozick have also argued against this. That well, if you are working for 100 days suppose, and you are paying 20% tax, not for the maintenance of security and law and order, which says requires 10% of your earnings. So, 10 days in 100 days, you work for your own security, which is the role of the government as the night watchman.

But another 10% or 10 days of your 100 days of work, for subsidising the poor, then one is engaging in moral cannibalism. One is forcing the wealthy to work, for funding the poor. So, this can sound very harsh and cruel. But this also needs to be understood, without an emotional reaction, that this is how the hedonists would argue, irrespective of their place in the wealth chain.

Right. So, this is a system that is being argued for, irrespective of where one's location in the wealth chain is. So, the moral cannibalism of all Hedonist and Altruist doctrines, lie in the premise that, happiness of one man necessitates the injury of another. So, the happiness of one man necessitates the injury of another.

How is it in the case of Hedonist. Well, Hedonist wants their own pleasure. So, they

think they can harm others, to get their own pleasure. The Altruist wants the other's pleasure. And therefore, willingly inflict suffering on his or her own self, to give pleasure to the other. In both the cases, it is an act of moral cannibalism.

Today, most people hold this premise as an absolute, not to be questioned. And when, one speaks of man's right to exist for his own sake, for his own rational self-interest, most people assume automatically, that this means, that his right to sacrifice others. Such an assumption, is a confession of their own belief, that to injure, enslave, rob, or murder others, is in man's self-interest, which he must selflessly renounce. The idea that, man's self-interest can be served, only by a non-sacrificial relationship with others, has never occurred to those Humanitarian apostles of unselfishness, who proclaim their desire to achieve the brotherhood of men. And, it will not occur to them, or to anyone, as long as the concept of rational, is omitted from the concept of values, desires, self-interest, and ethics.

Now again, that is quite a ridiculing tone. But, looking at the apostles of unselfishness, that claims for charity, that why do not you give all, more than, what you barely need, anything other than, what you barely need. Because, there is a lot of suffering in the world there. And, they do have their point of argument. But, and that is quite politically correct.

And, but yet, as a Philosopher, you have to be open to ideas, that are relevant, may not be politically correct. And here, this is one, politically incorrect idea, popularly politically incorrect. But here, claiming that well, we are not entitled, or better off are not entitled, to serve the ill of. And, any set of values, that requires the sacrificial of one, for the benefit of the other, is being moral cannibalistic. The Objectivist Ethics, proudly advocates and upholds, rational selfishness.

Which means, the values required for man's survival qua man. Which means, the values required for human survival, not the values produced by desires, the emotions, the aspirations, the feelings, the whims, or the needs of irrational brutes, who have never outgrown the primordial practice of human sacrifices, have never discovered an industrial society, and can conceive of no self-interest, but that of grabbing the loot of the moment. So, now here, she introduces, or defines another crucial term called, what she means as, a Rational Selfishness. Rational Selfishness is not the same as the, selfish looter or moochar, who is trying to snatch each other's property, snatch, whichever they want to snatch. So, and this is why, it is not Survival Ethics. Survival Ethics, does not mean just, robbing and snatching from the other, which in a certain connotation, Survival Ethics stands for.

To be selfish is, to be selfish about the values required for man's survival qua man. That means, how man should survive, man as man. Which means, the values required for human survival, not the values produced by desires, emotions, aspirations, and other irrational brutes, who have never outgrown. So, the irrational, the unearned. So, those desires, all desires are not equal.

So, the desire of a looter, is not the same thing, cannot be equally, ethically valid as the desire of a producer. So, Rational Selfishness is when, we have the values that are rationally arrived at, not just any desire as equally rational, or equally compelling. The Objectivist Ethics, holds that the human good does not require human sacrifices, and cannot be achieved by the sacrifice of anyone to anyone. It holds that, rational interests of men do not clash. There is no conflict of interest among men, who do not desire the unearned, who do not make the sacrifices, or nor accept them, who deal with one another, as traders giving value for value.

The principle of trade is the only rational ethical principle of all human relationships. Personal, social, private, and public, spiritual, and material, it is the principle of justice. So, now here, as we have talked in the, towards the end of the presentation on this particular chapter, that trade is been regarded as an example of justice. Taking the example of friendship, that you are friends with a person, because you exchange value with each other. Value to your life, you add value to your friend's life. But if your friend is just ranting about, his or her sob story all through, or ranting about his achievements, and expects you to listen, then that is really not a friendship, and it probably will not last.

So, all lasting relation, the sense of justice is, when there is a exchange, a trade between values. A trader is a man, who earns what he gets, and does not give or take the undeserved. So, it is not even about giving charity. So, look at it this way. If you are prone to think that well, taking the unearned is incorrect, but you might dole or give us charity, even that itself is incorrect, according to the Objectivist Ethics.

That is wrong. Because, you should not even give the unearned, you have to make the other earn it. He deals with men, by means of a free voluntary, unforced, uncoerced exchange. An exchange, which benefits both parties, by their own independent judgement. A trader does not expect to be paid for his defaults, only for his achievements.

Crucial to acknowledge that. He does not switch to others, the burden of his failures. And, he does not mortgage his life, into bondage to the failures of others. So, two issues that can be relevant here, is one what we have already talked about, is the act of governments, for giving loans, or dolling out broken businesses, or dolling out banks,

which are supposedly too big to fail. Looking at these, is that, then we are even to accept that dole, you are not a winner. You are a loser, in the books of Objectivist Ethics, because you are accepting the unearned.

The second thing, is about the notion of charity, of Philanthropy. The Philanthropy is been about, and to think of this, in its strictest form, the Objectivist Ethics would dissuade Philanthropy, to be done. Because, the Philanthropist is giving something, to the undeserved. That each person, should have that sense of self-respect. So, it almost reminds me of Sathri's, I think it is Sathri's notion of punishment, that where, if you have done something wrong, and you deserve a punishment, but you are condoned, is that something for you to be happy.

Probably, you have escaped the physical problems, associated with the punishment. But you have been belittled. Your human agency has been belittled. And, that is why, punishment is your right. Because, that is your right to redemption. But if you are forgiven, like we forgive children, often, it is also undermining their agency.

So, if you are forgiven as an adult, your agency is being undermined. In spiritual issues, by spiritual I mean pertaining to man's consciousness, the currency or medium of exchange is different. But the principle is the same. Love, friendship, respect, admiration, are the emotional responses of one man, to the virtues of another. The spiritual payment given in exchange, for the personal selfish pleasure, which one man derives from the virtues of another man's character.

Only a brute, or an altruist, would claim, that the appreciation of another person's virtues, is an act of selflessness. That, as far as one's own selfish interest, and pleasure are concerned, it makes no difference, whether one deals with a genius, or a fool, whether one meets a hero, or a thug, whether one marries an ideal woman, or a slut. In spiritual issues, a trader is a man, who does not seek to be loved for his weaknesses or flaws, only for his virtues, and who does not grant his love to the weaknesses or the flaws of others, only to their virtues. To love is to value. Only a rationally selfish man, a man of self-esteem, is capable of love.

Because, he is the only man capable of holding firm, consistent, uncompromising, unbetrayed values. The man who does not value himself, cannot value anything or anyone. It is only on the basis of rational selfishness, on the basis of justice, that men can be fit, to live together, in a free, peaceful, prosperous, benevolent, rational society. Okay. Now, here, I will stick the example of a relationship, say a romantic relationship.

Now, if a romantic relationship is based on a sense of empathy, on a sense of kindness,

on a sense of charity, right. One is suffering, and the other one feels very sorry about the other's suffering. And that, is the strongest bond in the association. Then, according to the Objectivist Ethics, that is not a relationship of love. Because, to love is to value equally, to add value to each other. So, I think that can serve as a beautiful rendition of human relationships, where as a significant other, we require that person to value us, just as we value them.

Neither to be servile to us, nor expect us to be servile to them, to add value to their lives, and for the other, to add value to one's own life. So, that as understanding, what it means to be in love, or in a significant romantic relationship. Okay. Can man derive any personal benefit from living in a human society.

Now, from moving from love, to the basis of human society. So, what is the personal benefit of living in a human society. Perhaps, the Objectivist Ethics has been sounding too individualistic, celebrating the individual. But, what is the role of love first, which she elaborated, and then society.

Can man derive any personal benefit from living in a human society. Yes. If it is a human society. Two great values to be gained from social existence are, knowledge and trade. These are the two significant values. Man is the only species, that can transmit and expand his store of knowledge, from generation to generation. The knowledge potentially available to man, is greater than any one man could begin to acquire in his own life span.

Every man gains an incalculable benefit from the knowledge discovered by others. The second great benefit is the division of labour. It enables a man to devote his effort, to a particular form of cooperation.

I lost track of it. I will just come back to it. Yes. The second great benefit is the division of labour. It enables man to devote his effort, to a particular field of work, and to trade with others, who specialise in other fields. This form of cooperation allows all men, who take part in it, to achieve a greater knowledge, skills, and productive return on their effort, then they could have achieved, if they had to produce everything he needs, on a desert island, or on a self-sustaining farm. Now, here, two very crucial values, that she talks about, of social existence is knowledge and trade. One, is that we cannot understand the whole cosmos in our individual lives. Rather, because we have the advantage of libraries, as collective memories of mankind, as knowledge, which can be transmitted from one generation to other, there is so much knowledge, that we can acquire in one life.

Tremendous. And, perhaps if I remember correctly, Yuval Noah Harari's work on *Sapiens*, or one of his sequels, also talks about, that the real strength of human beings, is not their significant brain size and intellect, but rather their ability to network. That is where, even this is something, that has been long back anticipated by Ayn Rand, where she says that, when she talks about division of labour, that there is so much we can do, because we can network, that we can connect people's efforts together, and then bring about changes. So, these are classic ideas, that have been surviving all through.

Now, let me continue. But these very benefits indicate, delimit, and define, what kind of men can be of value to one another, and in what kind of society. Only rational, productive, independent men, in a rational, productive, free society. Parasites, moochers, looters, brutes, and thugs, can be of no value to human being. Nor can he gain, any benefit from living in a society, geared to their needs, demands, and protection. Society that treats him as a sacrificial animal, and penalises him, for his virtues, in order to reward them, for their vices, which means a society, based on the ethics of altruism.

No society can be of value to a man's life, if the price is the surrender of his rights to life. Now, look at it this way. To make a rather, politically incorrect, or in that sense, rather simplistic understanding. If you look at the view, or the data for migrations, across countries in the world, you will probably find migrations taking place from, less free societies, to free societies. Right. Where, talent is rewarded, is blossomed, is allowed to blossom.

Look at, say the example of society, say society states, or countries we know, that are torn by civil wars. Now, they are not even producing enough. They are in a perpetual state of chaos, and fight. People and we have heard of countries, in where people take perilous journeys, to migrate into neighbouring affluent countries. Journeys that can even cost them their life. But, because their home countries are strife, or filled with strife and civil war, that there is no scope for production, there is no scope for flourishing.

And, this is what, when she says that, if no society can be of value to man's life, if the price is the surrender of the right to his life. The basic political principle of the Objectivist Ethics is, no man may initiate the use of physical force against others. No man, or group, or society, or government, has the right to assume the role of a criminal, and initiate the use of a physical compulsion against any man. Men have the right to use physical force, only in retaliation, and only against those who initiate its use.

The ethical principle involved, is simple and clear-cut. It is the difference between, murder and self-defence. A holdup man seeks to gain a value wealth, by killing his victim. The victim does not grow richer, by killing a holdup man. The principle is, no



man may obtain any values from others, by resorting to physical force. The only proper moral purpose of a government, is to protect man's rights, which means, to protect him from physical violence, to protect his right to his own life, to his own liberty, to his own property, and to the pursuit of his own happiness.

Without property rights, no other rights are possible. So, when we look at this, two notions introduced here, about government and properties. So, what is the role of government. Okay. And, preliminary prior to that is, legitimacy of force.

Force can be used only to prevent, or to control, uncalled for aggression. And, the job of government is to protect him, or the citizen, from physical violence. And, notice here, crucial factor. In fact, this particular highlighted text, sounds so similar to the philosophy and ethos of North America, particularly the United States of America. When we look at, property. Property now is coming out to be as, very significant property, as expression of one's individual self.

So, property is not just an asset for you to use, it is also something to be valued. There is a moral component to property, and a morally rightful, deserved component to property. Okay. Let me continue.

I will not attempt, in a brief lecture, to discuss the political theory of Objectivism. Those who are interested, will find it presented, in full detail in *Atlas Shrugged*. I will say, only that, every political system is based on, and derived from a theory of Ethics. And, that the Objectivist Ethics is the moral base, needed by that political economic system, which today is being destroyed all over the world, destroyed precisely for lack of a moral philosophical defence and validation, the original American system, Capitalism. If it perishes, it will perish by default, undiscovered and unidentified. No other subject has ever been hidden by, so many distortions, misconceptions, and misrepresentations.

Today, few people know, what Capitalism is, how it works, and what has its actual history. When I say, Capitalism, I mean full, pure, uncontrolled, unregulated, laissez-faire, Capitalism, with a separation of state and economics, in the same way, and for the same reasons as the separation of state and church. A pure system of Capitalism, has never yet existed, not even in America, she means United States of America. Various degrees of government control, had been undercutting, and distorting it, from the start. Capitalism is not the system of the past, it is the system of future, if mankind is to have a future. For those, who are interested in the history, and psychological causes of the Philosopher's treason against Capitalism, I will mention that, I discuss them in the title essay of my book, for the new intellectual.

The present discussion, has to be confined to the subject of Ethics. I have presented the barest essentials of my system. But, they are different to indicate, in what manner the Objectivist Ethics, is the morality of life. As against, the three major schools of the Ethical Theory, the Mystic, the Social, and the Subjective, which have brought the world, to its present state, which represent the morality of death. So, here now, she moves to the first person.

And, the first person, she is clearly defending Capitalism. Because, it is being written at a time, when the Capitalism was quite under attack. And, if you are viewing from India, you may be aware that, if you look at the cinemas, the movies that were popular movies, or in general movies that were produced, say 30-40 years back, say 70's or 80's, typically 90's, with Amitabh Bachchan, the star being touted as the angry young man. There was a theme to that particular popular character. The angry young man was angry, because he found injustice.

And, who were causing the injustice? The Capitalists were causing injustice. So, as ridiculed as the Seits, the Seits were the one, who were causing injustice. And, here is the angry young man character, who is rebelling against these clout of rich people, the wealthy people, who apparently are sucking away the money from society. And, there was an anger towards these wealthy people. And, that is what popular media always captures, the popular sentiment of the anger against the wealthy, who were seemingly sucking up the wealth of the nation.

Right. So, India had a history of nationalisation of private enterprise, of thorough government control. And then, again the world changed, in 1990's, when the Indian economy decided, or had to open up. Wealth started being celebrated. If you look today, for people who have, maybe who are in their 40's, or so who have been looking, who have had experience of the 1980's, 90's, and today's India.

You can see, so much of difference. Today, entrepreneurs are being celebrated, as they are being said as, Wealth Creators, Wealth Generators. These changes have occurred, because we have now imbibed a philosophy, that is closer to, what the Objectivist Ethics hold. The three schools differ only in their method of approach, not in their content. In content, they are merely variants of altruism. The ethical theory, which regards man as a sacrificial animal, which holds that man has no right to exist, for his own sake.

That service to others, is the only justification for his existence. And that, self-sacrifice is his highest moral duty, virtue, and value. The difference occurs only, over the question of, who is to be sacrificed, and to whom.

Altruism holds death as its ultimate goal, and standard of value. Ayn Rand would have hated Mother Teresa, probably. And it is logical. Okay. That was just colloquially, or jokingly said. But, she would disagree with the philosophy of Mother Teresa, probably. Probably. But again, Mother Teresa, we look at, in a more nuanced manner. It would be, because when it is, I am sure, if the capitalist would question that, when suffering is caused, not by your own doing, but by chance, can there be a role of subsidy, or intervention over there.

Right. If somebody is affected with a, life threatening disorder. Let us say typically, terminal illnesses, or cancer. Can we, would the capitalist say that, no, they should suffer their consequences. I do not think so.

It is not going to be so heartless. Capitalists have always been critiqued, for being heartless. But, I do not think, this is the extent to which, the objectivist ethics would go on. So, especially sufferings, that are self-inflicted, or come from incorrect decisions, that one himself makes. Okay. So, Altruism holds death as its ultimate goal, and standard of value. And, it is logical that, renunciation, resignation, self-denial, and every other form of suffering, including self-destruction, are the virtues it advocates.

And, logically, these are the only things, that practitioners of Altruism have achieved, and are achieving now. Observe that, these three schools of Ethical Theory are anti-life. Not merely in content, but also in the method of their approach. So, she talks about the Mystic, the Subjectivist, and who is the third one. So, what she is protesting against, or reacting to, what was at time, the Social, the Subjective, and the Mystic.

Right. So, and for all of them, she would charge them, with the charge of moral cannibalism, and using death as their ultimate goal. And, let us see, how she breaks them down, one by one. The Mystic Theory of Ethics. So, she says, observe that, these three schools of Ethical Theory are anti-life. Not merely in content, but also in their method of approach. The Mystic Theory of Ethics is explicitly based on the premise, that the standard of value of man's ethics is set beyond the grave, by the laws or requirements of another supernatural dimension.

That ethics is impossible for man to practice. That it is unsuited, and opposed to man's life on earth. And that, man must take the blame for it, and suffer through the whole of his earthly existence, to atone for the guilt of being unable to practice the impracticable. The dark ages, and the middle ages, are the existential monument to this theory of ethics.

Right. too much from people. And, it is based on whims, or just some revelation,

which she argues for as unjustified. The Social Theory of Ethics, substitutes society for God. And, although it claims that, its chief concern is life on earth, it is not the life of man, not the life of an individual, but the life of a disembodied entity, the collective, which in every relation to every individual, consists of everybody except himself. As far as the individual is concerned, his ethical duty is to be selfless, voiceless, rightless, slave of any need, claim, or demand, asserted by others.

The Moto Dog-eat-dog, which is not applicable to Capitalism, nor to dogs, is applicable to the Social Theory of Ethics. The existential monuments, to this theory are, Nazi Germany, and Soviet Russia. Right. So, the Dog-eat-dog world, what typically is about, has been critiqued as, how Capitalism works, is something she clearly denies. Because here, well, it is not about snatching value, but about creating value. So, for her, Capitalism is not a zero-sum game, that one man's meat is another man's poison.

So, it is a game of, growing the pie, so that, everybody can have a share of it. So, you become wealthy by growing the pie. I always give the example of, say the IPL Cricket Tournaments. I think, it is called the Indian Premier League. So, it is a set of short duration matches, held with teams constructed. And, a new idea, suddenly now, is quite popular, and has generated a lot of wealth.

Now, the zero-sum game way of looking at IPL, would be that, well, the money is being moved from people's pockets, into IPL. And that will be a zero-sum game of looking at it. But, the other way of looking at it, is that, money is being generated, value is being generated. People are paying for the tickets, or advertisers are advertising. And the entire economy is moving, and money is being generated.

So, when we look at wealth as a zero-sum game, that is one philosophy of living. Whereas, when we look at wealth as an ever growing pie, that it is not a zero-sum game, and value can be generated. It is not a fixed value, that has to be transferred from here and there. That is another, or the capitalist way of looking at things. So, now she talks about, Soviet Russia, and Nazi Germany, about where social society became the cornerstone of morality.

The subjectivist theory of Ethics is, strictly speaking, not a theory, but a negation of Ethics, and more. It is a negation of reality. A negation, not merely of man's existence, but of all existence. Only the concept of a fluid plastic indeterminate Heraclitan Universe, could permit anyone to think, or to preach that, man needs no objective principles of action. That reality gives him, a blank check on values, that anything he cares to pick up as the good or evil, will do. That man's whim, as a valid moral standard, that the only question is, how to get away with it.

The official monument to this is, theory is the present state of our culture. So, she is almost thematically looked at it, in a temporal fashion. The ancient times in the Western world, the times of medieval and ancient times, where mystics and religious practices, dominated our moral life, followed which with society. And typically, she is talking about Soviet Russia, and Nazi Germany. And now, the current stage, where we are all in a sense of moral anarchy, that whatever we like to do, is what is to be done.

It is not men's immorality, that is responsible for the collapse, now threatening to destroy the civilised world. But the kind of moralities, men have been asked to practice. The responsibility belongs to philosophers of altruism. They have no cause to be shocked by the spectacle of their own success, and no right to damn human nature.

Men have obeyed them, and have brought their moral ideas into full reality. It is philosophy, that sets man's goals, and determines their course. It is only philosophy, that can save them now. Today, the world is facing a choice. If civilisation is to survive, it is the altruist morality, that men have to reject. I will close with the words of John Galt, which I address as he did, to all the moralists of altruism, past or present.

You have been using a fear as your weapon, and have been bringing death to man, as his punishment for rejecting your morality. We offer him life, as his reward, and for accepting ours. So, this is in a way, we have explored Altruism, by arguing, looking at a text, arguing against it. So, life affirming morality, that is what the author talks about it. Now, reflecting a little meta reflection on this exercise. Now, to the beginning of this exercise, I thought that, this reading of the text, that I did not know, how it would go about, how would I feel about it, how will it be received, will it be worthwhile, or will it just be reading out a text.

Well, that of course, you are welcome to share your opinions on this. But for me, it has been surprisingly fruitful. Because, once you read text closely, no matter, and this is, I have read it for nth times, this is another time, that I am reading it. But, it is when I read closely, and I am almost conversing with myself, for the want of an audience, it was not as dull, drab, and boring, that I feared.

Rather, it had moments of a lot of new provocations, and ideas, that came along to it. So, I hope, it has served the same to you. And, with this, we end the second module of the course on Moral Thinking. And, we will start with the third module, next. Thank you. .