



CAPITALISM AS PREMISE OF OBJECTIVISM IN AYN RAND'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Capitalism is a social system. It is based on the recognition of individual rights, including property right in which all property is privately owned. By contrast it may not be defined as a system of competition. It does involve a unique form of competition along with many other desirable social features. Under Capitalism, state and economics are separated, just as state and church are separated. The term "Laissez-faire Capitalism" is a redundancy albeit a necessary one in today's linguistic chaos. It is a system of laissez-faire. It is not the mixture of political opposites that now rules the West. It is the only moral system. It is also the only system that makes possible the achievement of virtue, of any proper virtue and therefore, of every moral value. Individual rights are the means of subordinating society to moral law. Every political system is based on the some code of ethics. A right is a moral principle defining and sanctioning a man's freedom of action in a social context. The only fundamental right is a man's right to his own life because life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action. It is portrayed in the novels of Ayn Rand.

Key Words- Capitalism, Laissez-faire Capitalism, Objectivism

INTRODUCTION

A government is an institution that holds the exclusive power of enforced rules of social conduct in a given geographical area. A government is the means of placing the relative use of physical force under objective control, under objectively defined laws. Man's rights can be violated only by the use of physical force. Man can deprive another of his life or enslave him, rob him, prevent him from pursuing his own goals or to compel him to act against his own rational judgment.

Ayn Rand says:

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“Capitalism, is a term used to denote the economic system that has been dominant in the western world since the breakup of feudalism. Fundamental to any system called capitalist are the relations between private owners of non-personal means of production.”(CUI, 13)

Ayn Rand defends *Capitalism* as the ideal form of human society. *Objectivism* reserves the name ‘Capitalism’ for full laissez-faire capitalism, a society in which individual rights are consistently respected and in which all property is therefore privately owned. Rand supports the above mentioned view that Objectivists are in a mixed economy consist of a certain aspects of capitalism and its opposite called pure socialism.

Objectivism values creative achievement and regards capitalism as the only kind of society in which it can flourish. A society is ruled by the Objectivist standards, moral to the extent that individuals are free to pursue their goals. This freedom requires that human relationships of all forms be voluntary, mutual consent being the defining characteristics of a free society. Economically, people are free to produce and exchange. They see it as a complete a separation of state and economics as of state and church.

Ayn Rand propounds that *Capitalism* has a bias against the public sector for two reasons. First of all, all products and income occur, initially to the private sector. Secondly, the pressure of private business to sell leads to the formidable array of devices of modern salesmanship which influence customer choice and consumer values towards private consumption.

It should be noted that the followers of *Objectivism* are not conservatives. They are rather, radicals for *Capitalism* fighting for philosophical base. The fundamental problem of confronting the contemporary world is the role of mind in man’s existence. The basic conflict of our age is not merely political or economic, but moral and philosophical. The so-called redistribution of wealth is only a superficial manifestation of the mystical altruism.

Capitalism is an economical system in which the instruments of production are owned by private individuals who operate them for their personal profit. *Capitalism* is the only system based on objective theory of values. *Capitalism* and altruism are incompatible, they are philosophical opposites. They cannot exist for the same man and for the same society. *Capitalism* rewards the pursuit of rational self-interest. It is also a system of Objectivity. It implements the right code of morality because it is based on the right view of metaphysics and epistemology.



Capitalism is incompatible with any version of intrinsicism. It is a system for mentally active, men of worldly values, not for the passive self-abnegators. In Capitalism, the greater man's power to think and thereby to satisfy his materialistic greed, the greater benefits he confers on his fellows. It is a corollary of the fundamentals of philosophy. Whoever understands *Capitalism* sees it as the social system flowing from the axiom that "existence exists".

Ayn Rand states:

"Capitalism demands the best of every man-his rationality and rewards him accordingly. It leaves every man free to choose the work he likes, to specialize in it, to trade his product for the products of others, and to go as far on the load of achievement as his ability and ambition will carry him." (FNI, 25, 26)

Man's success depends on the objective value of his work and rationality. If man wants to specialize in his work or trade his products over others, it goes on the road of achievement as his ability and ambition carries with him. *Capitalism* has also wiped out slavery in matter and spirit. Man's Objective values and his work are the best products and best judgment in every field of human endeavor as to raise the standard of living.

Ayn Rand propounds that capitalism has not yet been discovered, as collectivism as a social ideal is dead. *Capitalism* is necessary to stress that men have the right and the moral obligation of self defense, the right to use physical force only as relation and only against those who indicate its use for self-reverence. *Capitalism* wins and holds its markets by free competition at home and abroad. A market conquered by values can be of value only to those advocates of a mixed economy who seek to close it to the international competition. The businessmen used to seek special markets by government action abroad. The intellectuals have manufactured such doctrines as public interest and national prestige.

Leonard Peikoff too adds his comments:

*"Capitalism", in Ayn Rand's definition, "is a social system based on the recognition of individual rights, including property rights, in which all property is privately owned."*¹

This is a definition in terms of fundamentals and not of consequences. In contrast, *Capitalism* may be defined as the system of competition that exists in most societies including totalitarian ones. It is also a system of 'laissez-faire. It is not a mixture of political opposites that rule the West. It is a system of coercive monopolies and cut-throat competition. It also debases man by creating hunger and subverts morality by creating affluence. Capitalism's



greed causes inflammation. It does involve a unique form of competition along with many other desirable social features.

Ayn Rand propounds:

“The ideal political-economic system is laissez-faire capitalism. It is a system where men deal with one another, not as victims and executioners, nor as masters and slaves, but as traders, by free, voluntary exchange to mutual benefit.” (VOR, 4).

There is a contrast between Rand’s views about conceptual *Capitalism* and the objectives about *Capitalism*. Rand says that sometimes *Capitalism* is a cut-throat pattern; on the other hand *Objectivism* regards it as a beneficiary system in which the innovations of the most creative benefits are enjoyed by anyone in society. *Objectivism* values creative achievement itself and regards, *Capitalism* as the only kind of society in which it can flourish. It is also a system where no man may obtain any values from others by physical force. No man may initiate from others by physical force against others. The government acts only as a policeman that protects man’s right.

In most of the modern collectivists, alleged advocates of human brotherhood, benevolence and cooperation are committed to subjectivism in the humanities, but the concept of *Capitalism* is only for those few people who use and operate for their profit. The major symptom of man’s cultural intellectual and moral degradation is the shrinking of vision and goals to the concrete bound range of the immediate moment.

Ayn Rand opines that *Capitalism* is destroyed by the morality of altruism. *Capitalism* is based on individual rights not on the sacrifice of the individuals to the public good of the collective. *Capitalism* is not a system of the past but the future. Ayn Rand advocates and stresses that *Capitalism* is incompatible to altruism. Rand propounds the history of Western civilization that the first society in history was created by and dominated by the men of the mind, who were both the men of word and deed.

Mimi Reisel Gladstein observes:

*“They inaugurated the economically free nineteenth century which Rand describes as being the period closest to laissez-faire capitalism that the world has ever achieved.”*²



She also argues that in a capitalistic society the key figures are the intellectuals and the businessmen. Rand sees businessmen as great liberators who through their efforts free the masses from eighteen hour working day and raise the standard of living by making the latest scientific and technological discoveries popularly available.

Ayn Rand says that the cause of many of our current problems is that businessmen have accepted unearned guilt promulgated by intellectual altruists. Rand sees *Capitalism* as the only moral political-economic system in history, a system which has been a great boon to mankind. Rand's contention is that it is being destroyed because its tenets are not being properly identified even by its loudest adherents. Her purpose is to clearly identify the benefits of *Capitalism* while also exposing the nature of its arch enemy, altruism.

Ayn Rand interprets if there is any hope for the future of a country. She says 'yes' because the country has one asset left, the matchless productive ability of its people. One must reveal to this country the secret which all those posturing intellectuals of any political denomination, who clamor for the openness and truth. They try so hard to cover up that the name of that miraculous productive system is called Capitalism. The country itself is the asset of *Capitalism* and *Capitalism* is a productive ability to serve the asset of any country. Ayn Rand here advocates that the supremacy of a country is based on its productive ability.

William. F. O'Neill observes:

*"Capitalism- "an economic system in which the instruments of production are owned by the private individuals who operate them for their personal profit... and where goods and services are exchanged by free trade on a free market"- is the only economic system characterized by justice and honesty."*³

In a true capitalistic society, there are no slaves or masters and happiness is no longer tied to guilt under a destructive code of self-sacrifice. *Capitalism* is the only system in which rewards are allocated in accordance with purely Objective rational law.

Capitalism is also an important aspect of *Objectivism*. Leonard Peikoff observes: "*Capitalism*" in Ayn Rand's definition," is a social system based on the recognition of individual rights, including property rights, in which all property is privately owned."^{3 2}

Capitalism does involve a unique form of competition along with many other desirable social features. It is a moral social system that makes possible the achievement of virtue. It is not the mixture of political opposites that now rules the West. In a free market, there are no government controls over the economy. Men act and interact voluntarily by individual choice and free trade. The free trade is based on the recognition of individual rights including property rights.



Ayn Rand writes in *We the Living*:

“The Museum of the Revolution had an exhibition in honor of the visiting delegates of a Swedish Trade Union. Kira got a job lettering cardboard inscriptions. She bent through four long evenings, eyes dull, hands trembling over a ruler, painfully tracing even black letters that said: “Workers Starving In The Tenements Of The Capitalistic Exploiters Of 1910”, “Workers Exiled To Siberia By The Czarist Gendarmes Of 1905” (WL, 172-173)

Kira Argunova and her family have enjoyed great wealth and prosperity before the Revolution. Her father was the owner of the textile plant and they lived on a sizeable estate. At the outbreak of the revolution, Argounova’s textile factory is nationalized in the name of the people. In the name of the people, the banks were declared national property. Argounaova’s safe deposit boxes are broken open and emptied. Later, with the advent of the NEP, the family was able to open a private store but it like all the others went under because nobody could offer to shop at it.

During the time of revolution, it is equally important to recognize their unwillingness to participate in any kind of social work, join labor unions or seek employment at party institutions. According to Ayn Rand, *Capitalism* is the creation and in turns the creator of heroic individualism. It is the only perfect economic and social system under which an individualist can and will thrive. The future of a country depends upon preserving the capitalistic spirit and practice.

Kent Lansing says:

“Have you ever known a board to do anything. You see they don’t exist... All I mean is that a board of directors is one or two ambitious men—and a lot of ballast. I mean that groups of men are vacuums. Great big empty nothings..... Men are brothers, you know, and they have a great instinct for brotherhood—except in boards, unions, corporations and other chain gangs.” (FH, 311)

Roark has worked up in life from sheer poverty and ends by becoming the country’s leading architect. Gail Wynand has lived with his father as a child in the basement of an old house in the heart of New York’s largest slum Hell’s kitchen. Gail Wynand has worked at one job after another since early childhood. He had taught himself to read and write at the age of five by asking questions. He was sixteen when his father died. He is alone; jobless at the moment,

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with sixty five cents in his pocket, an unpaid rent bill and a chaotic erudition. Through sheer hard work, determination and military precision, he becomes a reporter, an associate editor and later the publisher and editor of *The Banner*. He builds up a fortune by buying real estate and invests his money in different enterprises. His dream is to build a sky-scraper to be called the Wynand Building.

Capitalism is also a basic aspect of *Objectivism* illustrated by Francisco in Ayn Rand's novel, *Atlas Shrugged* as:

"Mr. Reardon" said Francisco, his voice solemnly calm, "if you saw Atlas, the giant who holds the world on his shoulders, if you saw that he stood, blood running down his chest, his knees, his arms trembling but still trying to hold the world aloft with the last of his strength, and the greater his effort the heavier the world bore down upon his shoulders-what would you tell him to do." "I.....don't know. What could he do? What would you tell him?" "To shrug" (AS, 151)

The story of *Atlas Shrugged* presents the conflict of two fundamental antagonists, two opposite schools philosophy or two opposite attitudes toward life. As a brief means of identification, there is reason-individualism *capitalism* axis versus the mysticism-altruism-collectivism axis. The story also demonstrates that the basic conflict of our age is not merely political or economic, but moral and philosophical.

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