



PRODUCTIVITY AS BASIC PREMISE OF OBJECTIVISM IN AYN RAND'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Productive work is the process by which man's consciousness controls his existence, a constant process of acquiring knowledge and shaping matter to fit one's purpose of translating an idea into physical form. Productiveness, like every virtue involves two integrated components consciousness and existence or thought and action or knowledge and its material implementation. Productive ability is a value by the standard of man's life because, like all values, a course of virtue is required in order to gain and keep it. It is a road of man's unlimited achievement and calls upon the highest attributes of his character, his creative ability, his ambitions, his refusal to bear uncontested disasters, his dedication to the goal of reshaping the earth in the image of his values. Productive Work is presented in Ayn Rand's novels. Reason is the source, the precondition of individual's productive work and pride is the result. The virtue of productiveness is the recognition of the fact that productive work is the road of man's unlimited achievement and calls upon the highest attributes of his character, his creative ability, his dedication to the goal of reshaping the earth in the image of his values.

Key Words- Productivity, Objectivism,

INTRODUCTION

Productive work does not mean the unfocused performance of the motions of some job. It means the consciously chosen pursuit of a productive career, in any line of rational endeavor, great or modest, on any level of ability. It is not the degree of a man's ability, not the scale of

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his work that is ethically relevant but the fullest and most purposeful use of his mind. 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 evasion. Man chooses his values by a conscious process of thought. He accepts them by default, by subconscious associations, on faith, on someone's authority, by some form of social osmosis or blind imitation.

Productive work is the most fundamental of these five areas that allow man to experience the enjoyment of life. They are productive work, human relationships, recreation, art and sex. Through his work, man gains basic sense of control over existence. His sense of efficacy is the necessary foundation of the ability to enjoy any other value. The man's life lacks direction or purpose, the man who has no creative goal, necessarily feels helpless and out of control, feels inadequate and unfit for existence. The man who feels unfit to existence is incapable of enjoying it.

Productive work is also one of the significant areas of Ayn Rand's philosophy of *Objectivism*. Every individual should pass productivity as his own self. Ayn Rand rightly puts forward the idea of productive work as:

"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."
(VOS, 25)

Productivity or productive achievement is also one of the basic premises of *Objectivism*. Leonard Peikoff puts forward the concept of *productiveness* as:

*"Productiveness" is the process of creating material values, whether goods or services. Such creation is a necessity of human survival in any age, whether the values take the form of bearskins, clubs a pot full of meat, and paintings on the walls of caves; or of skyscrapers, ballet, brain surgery, and a gourmet meal abroad a computerized spaceship; or of the unimaginable luxuries and splendors yet to come."*¹

Productive work is the most fundamental norm. Through his own work man gains his basic sense of control over existence, his sense of efficacy which is the necessary foundation of the ability to enjoy any other value. One of the hall-marks of a man of self-esteem is the profound pleasure he experiences in the productive work of mind. His enjoyment of life is fed by his unceasing concern to grow in knowledge an ability to think, to achieve, to move forward, to meet new challenges and overcome them to earn the pride of a constantly expanding efficacy.



The Judges of World Council of Scholars state:

“Our blessing upon you, our brothers! Tomorrow, you will take us back into your fold and we shall be an outcast no longer. Tomorrow we shall be one of you again. Tomorrow we shall be one of you again. Tomorrow...” (AN, 67)

For Ayn Rand, a man’s value rests in originality of his mind as expressed in his work and the value of the work resides in his personal investment in it, as in Equality 7-2521’s invention of light bulb. Equality 7-2521 discovers in his tunnel that the work of an individual’s hand is an extension of the individual’s very self and that the value of the product of his work lies not in the product’s benefit for society but in its own existence as the fruit of individual’s imagination.

Light represents *productivity* and truth in *Anthem*. Thus, Liberty 5-3000 becomes the Golden One, and Equality 7-2521 Prometheus, the bringer of light. Equality 7-2521’s contribution to the world in his invention of the light bulb and the house he and the Golden One find in the forest has windows to let the light in.

Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* is like a man possessed over the Enright House. The draftsmen whom he hired to work in his office were all charged with the same energy and tension like Howard. These were times when he remained in the office all night. They found him still working when they returned in the morning. He did not seem tired.

Austen Heller says to Roark:

“You’re unbearable when you’re working, Howard”, Austen Heller told him one evening. “I feel completely natural only when I’m working.” That’s it. You’re completely natural only when you’re one inch from bursting into pieces. What in hell are you really made, of Howard? After all, it’s only a building. It’s not the combination of holy sacrament, Indian torture and sexual ecstasy that you seem to make of it” “isn’t it?” (FH, 251-52)

This short answer of Howard Roark which is really in the form of a question is illustrative of the implication what *productive_work* was for him. Ayn Rand says plainly that love is a fulfillment of self and expression of self-esteem. The object of one’s love is important only to the degree that he or she fulfills one’s own personal need.

In the *Playboy* interview Alvin Toffler says:

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“Love is not self-sacrifice”, she told Alvin Toffler in the Playboy Interview, “but the most profound assertion of your own needs and values. It is for our own happiness that you need the person you love.”²

Only a man or a woman with personal self-esteem, one puts productive work above all else, and self above the other person can truly love. Late in 1963 and early in 1964, as Lyndon Johnson secured his hold on the electorate, Alvin Toffler of *Playboy* come to interview the rising new star of the radical right. It is a wide-ranging conversation. Rand tells Toffler that objective reality exists independently of any perceiver’s emotions, feelings, wishes, hopes and fears. Productive work is the chief goal of all her Objectivist followers. Alvin Toffler has illustrated Ayn Rand as an intense angry woman of fifty-eight in the *Playboy* interview. She is also explained, irrevocably, intransigently as a woman of self and individuality.

The novel presents physical labor as a pure, productive activity and thus something admirable. On the contrary, labor breeds unions, groups that the novel violently condemns. The nefarious Toohey makes his first appearance in the novel when he addresses a crowd of discontented laborers and easily manipulates their cooperative spirit to make them his spiritual captives.

Hank Rearden states:

“....They want us to pretend that we see the world as they pretend they see it. They need some sort of sanction from us. I know that if we value our lives, we must not give it to them. If they put you on a torture rack don’t give it to them. Let them destroy your railroad and my mills, but don’t give it to them. Because I know this much: I know that that’s our only chance.” (AS, 378)

Hank’s refusal to sell metal to the Institute marks the beginning of his rights to his own business. This idea that the looting government keeps asking for a sanction from their own victims is a clue that Dagny and Hank are beginning to understand that they, as complaint producers, are part of this ideological and political crumbling of the government. Hank and Dagny think at this point that if they do not give their sanction to the unfair practices imposed on them that they will eventually win over the looters.

Dagny thinks several times in the novel that the most important thing to her railway is power. This can be seen as a metaphor of a world. Rand believes that power of the world, the minds of people who are willing and able to produce important products of humanity are its power. The power is the power of these people’s minds. And when moral relativism or denial of



objective reality is preached, the power of these people's minds is hampered and will eventually be destroyed.

John Galt, the inventor of motor which would change the world, is *Atlas Shrugged's* most perfect example of *productivity*, power and when he and others like him, withdraw their contributions to the world, the engine of the world will eventually stop. This image of forward motion and of the power of men's minds is continued throughout the novel.

In this regards, Mimi Reisel Gladstein observes:

*"The most optimistic ending is reserved for Atlas Shrugged. In Atlas Shrugged however, the strike of the "men of the mind" vanquishes the looters, leeches and "second-hander", leaving the world firmly in the hands of creative and the productive."*³

The dollar sign is the symbol of the strikers. Their cigarettes are stamped with it and their town square displays a giant dollar sign. The dollar sign represents the things it is exchanged for, namely, the productive abilities of man and the goods and services created by the mind at work. The very existence of money suggests that there are goods produced and people able to produce them, which is what makes money meaningful and valuable.

James P. Draper also comments on *productive work* in Ayn Rand's novel, *We the Living*:

*"In We the Living Rand had not yet fully developed her concept of the parasitical. The negative characters are more specifically opportunistic than parasitical."*⁴

In *We the Living*, the parasitical are not productive, therefore as they do not contribute materially. They are in a very real sense feeding off the contributions of others. The Communists are not only productive but also their system does not promote productivity. What counts is not ability, but partly membership or congeniality. Pavel Syerov trades upon his supposed friendship with Andrei Taganov who is a real hero. He also benefits from dangerous activities of speculators. They take the chances and he is paid off. Victor Dunaev has some real abilities but he uses them to further his political aims not to accomplish anything concrete. The opportunists are not productive and therefore as they do not contribute materially. They are in a very real sense feeding off the contributions of others.

To sum up, after the detailed study of *Objectivism* and its major premises in Ayn Rand's four novels, we can conclude that Ayn Rand's ideas and message are disseminated through her



fiction. Ayn Rand has put forward the basic premises of *Objectivism* that made her a world class author. It is the medium through which her message is most widely and palatably broadcast. Those who oppose her politically and philosophically advocate the impact of her fiction; it also presents textual evidences to support the illustration of *Objectivism* in her four novels. It is also worthwhile that the whole body of her theory of *Objectivism* is derived from her own creative writing.

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