



## OBJECTIVISM IN AYN RAND'S NOVEL, *WE, THE LIVING*

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### ABSTRACT

*Ayn Rand was a woman who established herself as a secular cult, a judge of Objectivism and philosophy. Her place in American literature and philosophy is yet to be determined. She awaits her destiny and no one can predict it with certainty. However, she is remembered as whatever, value future generations place on her work; the Russian immigrant girl who rose to national and international fame as a defender of what she considered American values. Rand lived her life as only her unique sensibilities dictated. Ayn Rand is also considered as a novelist who was not satisfied to let her fiction to speak for itself and who spent a quarter century explaining it. She is the systematic philosopher, who flaunted her lack of formal credentials, purposely avoided the mainstream to challenge rather than make the team. We the Living is Ayn Rand's first novel published in 1936. It is an autobiographical novel. Ayn Rand points out to the vagaries of Socialism in this novel. The novel also defines quite simply, a well-crafted, good-read romantic existence in the post-revolutionary Petrograd.*

**Key words :** *Philosophy, Objectivism, Rational cognition*

### INTRODUCTION

*We the Living* has a literary standing as a modern classic. The novel was initially published by the United States Publishers for its anti-fascist and anti-communist themes in the late 1920's and 1930's. It is a novel about Soviet-dictatorship under which the values are suppressed. It is a novel of Kira's romantic love with two persons in her life.

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Ayn Rand has elaborated a system of thought *Objectivism*, that addressed issues in technical branches of philosophy usually left to advanced students and academics. *Objectivism* is a study of reality. *Objectivism* is a theory of knowledge. It is a rational cognition. It is also a theory of good and the right.

In *We the Living* Kira asks Andrei:

*“Can you sacrifice the few? When those few are the best. Deny the best its right to the top-and you have no best left. What are your masses but millions of dull, shriveled, stagnant souls that have no thoughts of their own, no dreams of their own, no will of their own, who eat and sleep and chew helplessly the words others put into their brains? And for those you would sacrifice the few who know life, who are life? I loathe your ideals because I know no worse injustice than the giving of the undeserved. Because men are not equal in ability and one can’t treat them as if they were. And because I loathe most of them.” (WL, 90)*

It is Ayn Rand’s objective of writing this book to tell the world of the harsh realities that has resulted from the Communism as opposed to the promises by the Soviet Government of building a utopian society for its people. Ayn Rand has denounced the concept practiced by the totalitarian state where the individual needs are sacrificed for the State.

Andrei Taganov is the second man in Kira’s life. He is a member of Red Army. He is described as a man of character and principles. Though, Kira and Andrei have opposite beliefs and political philosophies, they are brought together in friendship by their underlying passion of surrendering life to their causes.

Andrei, as a Marxist philosopher believes that he is working to provide his fellow comrades with a better tomorrow and Kira is working for architecture and beautiful buildings. Andrei, though, initially is hinted to be the villain of the story turns out to be the real hero. Andrei takes his life when he finds out that the cause he so intensely believed in and worked for has died and all that is left is just exploitation in the name of beliefs and philosophy.

James T. Baker rightly puts this in his words:

*“Kira argues with him that the state should exist for the people, not the people for the state, and that she will never be reconciled to the idea of sacrificing the individual for the common good.”<sup>1</sup>*



*We the Living* provides a dual outlook of a proletarian state, though it does not justify either. There is an illustration of a bourgeois capitalist and that of a member of the Red Army. Kira Argounova, the female protagonist of a novel is a representation of Rand's outlook on life and her beliefs. Akin to the author, Kira is opposed to the Communist philosophy of surrendering self to the State.

Kira dreams of becoming an architect someday, was an unconventional choice for the women of that era. She does not have any social obligations and believes that the only obligation she has is to her own self. Kira has a non-conformist attitude which is reflected in her decision of living with Leo as an unwed couple.

Kira, and Andrei are the characters of *Objectivism* in Ayn Rand's, *We the Living*. Andrei states:

*"That's strange", He smiled, "I must be a very poor Communist. I've always done only what I wanted to do."* Kira replies: *"I loathe your ideals."* (WL, 89).

Andrei always sticks up to the Communist principles when Kira asks him why Communists always do anything only when they are addressed to do. Andrei belongs to a collective state. He says that he is a poor Communist and has always done what he wants to do. Kira retorts him that she admires Communism but she despises the communist values and ideals.

Kira is a realist who keeps her ideas and aspirations alive. She decides to go with the system any way, until she feels powerful enough to challenge it. Her candor about her ideas at the Institute ultimately results in her expulsion from the Institute, despite Andrei's efforts to avert it. Kira and Andrei share a mutual respect and admiration for each other, in spite of their differing political beliefs. Andrei and Kira develop a friendship that endures until the end of the story.

Andrei, an important person in Kira's life, is portrayed by Rand as a man of character, resolve and an unassailable loyalty to his party ideology. Despite his political beliefs, Kira finds him the one person she can trust and with whom she can discuss her most intimate thoughts and views. Leo, cannot fulfill that role for her, but Andrei's affection and respect for Kira knows no bounds.

Ayn Rand presents Kira as a character of *Objectivism*. She writes:

*"There had been moments when she saw, in sudden astonishment, as if she had not grasped it before, just what she was doing to her own body; then she*

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*closed her eyes, for behind that thought was another one, more frightening, forbidden: of what she was doing to another man's soul." (WL, 252)*

Andrei's affection and respect for Kira is slowly turned into love. She is worried about what this may do to their beautiful and rare friendship. Andrei starts avoiding Kira. Kira misses him and needs his help. Eventually, when she confronts him in his house, Andrei explains his avoidance of her and confesses his love for her.

Kira is dismayed at first, but recovers to find in it a way to finance Leo's treatment. Though reluctant and desperate, Kira feigns love for Andrei and agrees to become his mistress in return for the promise of a complete secrecy about their relationship. Kira is never comfortable with what she was doing with her body, but is even more frightened by what she was doing with another man's soul. James T. Baker observes: "*Andrei was all his life a noble person, dedicated to noble causes, far superior to men who sought power or creature comforts.*"<sup>2</sup> Andrei is one of Rand's most sympathetic, misguided but worthy characters. He is a Communist, a fearless soldier and a heroic revolutionary. Andrei is an objectivist ideal of Ayn Rand. He is also a noble person dedicated to noble causes. His integrity does not allow him to remain silent about the betrayal of the Revolution. He comes to realize that even its ideas were not valid.

## WORKS CITED

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