



In Praise of Hijacking

Throttle up on the culture wars! On the heels of a Supreme Court decision striking down sodomy statutes and suggesting equal protection for homosexuals, President George W. Bush proposes a constitutional amendment protecting heterosexual marriage against those judges and municipal politicians who are—gasp!—sanctioning marital licenses between members of the same sex.

Bush's deplorable political pandering to his right-wing religious conservative base is only a prelude to the brutal election campaign ahead against Democratic Senator John Kerry, who would leave to the states the right to define marriage. What an Alice-in-Wonderland world we live in, when Republicans take a *federal* approach to social problems, and Democrats celebrate *states'* rights. I say: *Privatize* the marriage contract—for the same reason I'd advocate privatization of all government schools. Stop making marriage and education a battleground for the inculcation of *anybody's* social agenda! Leave All of Us Alone!

Alas, Laissez Faire is not a fashionable credo, so Homo Hysteria is quickly infecting every nerve, muscle, and joint of the body politic. Even those who are friendly to Objectivism have mounted an assault on the "homosexual agenda." In the electronic book, *The Hijacking of a Philosophy: Homosexuals vs. Ayn Rand's Objectivism* (Newton, New Hampshire: HP America, 2004), author Reginald Firehammer takes aim at my own recent SOLO monograph, *Ayn Rand, Homosexuality, and Human Liberation* (Cape Town, South Africa: Leap Publishing, 2003). Though he claims not to be an Objectivist, he acts as a self-appointed guardian of the philosophy's purity, and asks: "Is Objectivism really being 'hijacked'? If so, by whom, and for what purpose?"

Firehammer asserts that Objectivism is being hijacked by those who would use the philosophy to "normalize homosexuality." The hijackers' "real mission" is "clearly illustrated" in my own book, which affirms homosexuality "as a moral virtue," and makes it a "central issue," "the primary issue," "the gating issue" of Objectivism. Underlying Firehammer's assertions is the belief that Rand's view of homosexuality as "immoral" and "disgusting" is *constitutive* of Objectivism. To be *constitutive* is to imply that Rand's view is *essential* to her philosophy,

such that one cannot pull forth the thread of her stance without doing fundamental harm to the whole, integrated cloth of Objectivism.

To all this, I say: Nonsense. But if Firehammer is correct, then I say: Three Cheers for Hijacking, and I'll Pilot the Plane!

Unfortunately, as much as I'd like to, I don't have to volunteer for this task. Firehammer has conscripted me. He may not believe that my "hijacking" of Objectivism is a sign of outright intellectual corruption—he thinks it "a mistake or wrong direction," an "unintended consequence" of my work, "in spite of [my best] intentions." But he does believe that I am among the chief hijackers, along with Damian Moskowitz, who wrote a too-tolerant FAQ on homosexuality for The Objectivist Center, and Lindsay Perigo, openly gay editor of *The Free Radical*.

Firehammer is quite gracious in his critique; he views me as "a first-class researcher and advocate of Objectivism," and sees both Perigo and I as "accomplished in [our] fields," and possessive of "first-rate minds." He emphasizes that his "specific criticisms must not be construed as criticisms of the character or sincerity of any of these men or a repudiation of their positive contributions to the advancement of Objectivism as a philosophy. We are not indicting individuals, only some of their ideas; we are not impugning persons, only some of the views they advance."

Still, Firehammer's commendable civility seems to wither at times. He believes that those who "promote homosexuality ... in the name of Objectivism or as part of Objectivism [are being] intellectually dishonest and morally wrong." He even condemns the use of the word, "homophobia," as an act of "intentional duplicity." Those who target "homophobia" in Objectivism are on "a mission ... to take over Objectivism and turn

it into something *subjective*, irrational, and revolting to Objectivism and Objectivists." He sees "smearing," "deceit," and "intellectual fraud" in those charges of "homophobia" directed at opponents of the "homosexual agenda"—whatever *that* is. Indeed, it's a shame that Firehammer's e-book doesn't come with an accompanying music CD, for every time he mentions the "homosexual agenda," one expects to hear John Williams' shark theme from the movie "Jaws."

Perhaps Firehammer hasn't been on the downwind of homophobia. I receive hate mail, which is actually *fear* mail, on a fairly regular basis. The word "homophobia," like the word "xenophobia," accurately captures that *Fear of the Mysterious Other*, which often stands at the psychological base of expressed hatred for gays and lesbians. No, it does not apply to *everyone* who opposes homosexuality, but it is not an insignificant factor in the cultural debate.

Firehammer's Project—And Mine

Firehammer wishes to apply "Objectivist principles ... to such personal choices as one's sexual behavior." But he exempts from application all attempts to use Objectivism to sanction practices that Rand herself opposed. Just because Rand embraced a libertarian view on narcotics, pornography, and consensual adult relationships, doesn't mean that she morally approved of people's choices in these matters. And, apparently, her moral approval or disapproval trumps all other agent-relative, contextual concerns; Firehammer's portrait of Objectivism is therefore not of an individualist philosophy, but of an authoritarian one dictated by Rand's personal tastes. If you diverge from those tastes, you are no longer an Objectivist.

Firehammer goes so far as to create a strict *identity* between Objectivism and Rand's rejection of homosexuality; indeed, that rejection "*is* her philosophy." When Rand repudiated homosexuality as "immoral" and "disgusting" during the Q&A session of her lecture, "The Moratorium on Brains," this was not simply and "only her personal view," but part and parcel of her Objectivist philosophy.

Unlike Firehammer, I do not believe that Rand's view of sexuality is *essential* to Objectivism, except in the broadest possible terms: that love is a reflection of the self in the soul of our mates; that love is a response to values; that romantic love is the fullest integration of mind and body and the fullest

act of mutual visibility; and that sex, in such a context, is a celebration of life. The moment Rand starts talking about “masculinity” and “femininity,” or the relationship of men to women, or whether a woman should want to be President of the United States, she starts to introduce some very tenuous *personal* and *psychological* assumptions that go beyond strictly *philosophical* reasoning.

Because I obviously part company with Rand on the question of homosexuality, I made it a point to state, up-front in my own monograph, that I would be “examining Ayn Rand’s impact on the sexual attitudes of self-identified Objectivists in the movement to which she gave birth and the gay subcultures that she would have disowned. I take full responsibility for the final product. I do not speak for a group or a movement, but only for myself.”

I have *never* claimed to speak for Rand. I make Rand’s viewpoint explicit. I then make my own viewpoint explicit. In the engagement of our perspectives, there emerges a “fusion of horizons” (as Hans-Georg Gadamer would have called it). In this respect, the very title of my monograph—*Ayn Rand, Homosexuality, and Human Liberation*—is symbolic. It begins with the name *Ayn Rand*, a woman whose viewpoint engendered a problematic conflict between Objectivism and *Homosexuality*. The culminating phrase—*Human Liberation*—suggests a resolution. It suggests that Rand’s philosophy and homosexuality need not be in lethal opposition, and that it is possible to transcend the “false alternative.” Even the cover art, by Barry Kayton, suggests a resolvable triad of sorts: the heterosexual symbols are in the shadows, while the same-sex symbols are superimposed and fully visible. There is an interlinking between man-woman, man-man, and woman-woman relationships that appeals to their common humanity.

The primary purpose of my monograph was to engage in an act of sociological articulation: To drag the history of Objectivist “homophobia” *out of the closet*. This was a history that nobody wanted to acknowledge. I am the first person to bring these horror stories together and to make them explicit for the consideration of future generations. It is also my hope that such generations will re-examine the philosophical statements on homosexuality that have been offered by Rand and post-Randian thinkers.

Secondly, the monograph serves as a polemic, a rhetorical manifesto that seeks to reclaim the mantle of honesty, integrity, independence, and pride, for those whom Rand disowned. My reclamation is, partially, a political act insofar as it empowers people to separate the philosopher from the philosophy and to move toward a new conception of a “human” liberation that is open to all people, regardless of sexual orientation.

For Firehammer, this reclamation project is an act of hijacking. Homosexuality, says Firehammer, violates the law of identity, and Rand’s view of “sense of life” and the need for correct premises. And yet, while Firehammer accuses homosexuals of trying to “hijack” Rand’s philosophy by focusing obsessively on their sexuality, which is a “non-issue” in Objectivism, he himself reifies the sexual tastes of Objectivism’s founder as if they were the *essence* of Objectivist philosophy. Are we also to embrace “rape by engraved invitation”—Rand’s description of the rough sex in *The Fountainhead*—in order to be good, card-carrying Objectivists? Must we all agree with Rand’s perspective on Vermeer, or Rachmaninoff, or “Charlie’s Angels,” or Mickey Spillane in order to qualify as good Objectivists?

If we don’t establish any criteria by which to distinguish the essential from the nonessential characteristics in our definition of Rand’s Objectivism, then we might as well embrace the philosophy as a variant of Hegelian rationalist dogmatism. Leonard Peikoff himself has always been fond of quoting Hegel—“The True is the Whole”—precisely because he views Objectivism as constituted by the whole of *Ayn Rand’s work as published and approved* by her, in her lifetime. In this regard, he even exempts Rand’s posthumously published writing and his own writing from “official” Objectivism (though he has nothing to say about Nathaniel Branden’s writings—which were once a part of “official” Objectivism, prior to the 1968 Rand-Branden split). But even Peikoff once disagreed with Rand’s assessment of horror movies, of which he was a fan. Why is Rand’s assessment of horror movies—and their “malevolent universe premise”—substantially different from her assessment of homosexuality as “disgusting”? Or must we also denounce “Frankenstein” and “Dracula” films in order to be good Objectivists?

Firehammer takes this Rand-centered solipsistic view of Objectivism to absurd heights. He reiterates: “Objectivism is not someone else’s philosophy.” But this makes it nothing more and nothing less than Rand’s *personal* credo, to be applied only to the context of *her* life and *her* life *alone*.

Firehammer himself senses that there has probably never been a person whose every action and thought is perfectly consistent with the philosophy of Objectivism at all times and in all respects. But homosexuals are even less consistent. He’s kind enough to admit that a homosexual can be an Objectivist only “if within the scope of their honest understanding of Objectivism they embrace and practice the principles as consistently as they can. So long as they continue to practice homosexuality, however, they are inconsistent Objectivists. Homosexuality is not consistent with Objectivism, no matter how much one

believes it is, but so long as one does not understand that, one can be an Objectivist and a homosexual.”

So, to all you homosexuals: Ignorance of your immorality is the only way that you can be both an Objectivist and a homosexual. Eating of the tree of knowledge will banish you from *either* Objectivism *or* homosexuality, because you can’t have your, uh, cake, and eat it too. Clearly, Firehammer hopes that you’ll save yourself and renounce your sexual proclivities, for he believes that they are “abnormal and, in practice, both physiologically and psychologically self-destructive.” He views homosexuality as a chosen behavior, and not part of anyone’s “nature.” Being “male” or “female,” he says, is part of one’s nature. The body too has a specific nature, and it just can’t be used in any old way that we desire. Because man is a being of volitional consciousness, nothing in human nature *compels* anyone to “behave in any particular way beyond those physiologically determined actions that lie outside the province of conscious choice.” To be “normal,” then, is to act in consistency with one’s nature. Homosexuality is not a part of that nature, Firehammer contends—despite the fact that it has been manifested in other animal species, and in every human culture and every historical period. Indeed, the ancient Greeks, whom Rand celebrated, embraced it and extolled its virtues. None of this sways Firehammer.

For Firehammer, the only “normal people” are those who “have sex with someone of the opposite sex.” And sex is, well, sex. Homosexuals “have what they call sex with someone of the same sex,” but this is not sex, Firehammer protests, since sex entails *only* penile-vaginal “sexual intercourse.” Ultimately, his discussion of human sexuality is entirely dictated by the goal of procreation (Heaven Help Us if science should institutionalize laboratory reproduction of the species—we might have to otherwise enjoy ourselves!). In essence, Firehammer declares war on every *heterosexual* man or woman who ever participated in oral or anal delights and had the audacity to call it “sex.” On this subject, he is Bill Clinton’s soul-mate; the former President once insisted that he never had sex—Firehammer despises the phrase “having sex”—with “that woman.” Fellatio and being imaginative with a cigar just doesn’t qualify. If Congress had understood this simple principle, we might have avoided all the pomp and circumstance of a Presidential impeachment.

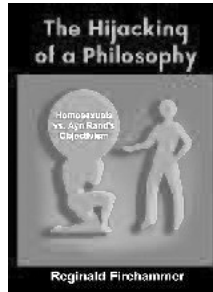
Firehammer is obsessed with telling us “What’s Wrong with Homosexuality.” His arguments, however, are a string of unproven assertions. He dismisses the very notion of “sexual orientation” as a “false concept” and declares homosexuality as “debauching true love and degrading sex.” His indictment of promiscuity and unsafe

sex is not an indictment of homosexuality, however; it is an indictment of promiscuity and unsafe sex. Male homosexuality, *as such*, is *not* “physically detrimental to those who practice it.” And lesbians are at no greater risk for certain diseases than are heterosexual women who don’t bear children; it is not women’s lesbianism *as such* that causes any heightened risks. In fact, lesbians are probably at *least* risk for AIDS ... so perhaps we should all become lesbians. Moreover, homosexuality *as such* is not the *cause* of psychological dysfunction; such dysfunction is often the by-product of the fear, pain, guilt, and shame that comes from a lack of self-acceptance, and these phenomena are sometimes manifested in behavioral patterns that are harmful to the individuals who practice them. Firehammer considers none of these facts.

Still, the author counsels homosexuals to stop acting on their own “involuntary attractions or desires,” and to “learn which [involuntary attractions or desires] are right to yield to and which are not.” Instead of surrendering “reason to desire,” homosexuals must practice *repression*, he urges. His discussion of the virtue of repression is entirely devoid of any Objectivist reference points. Not a single citation can be found to Chapter 5 of *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, by Nathaniel Branden. That book was derived entirely from Branden’s work while he was associated with Rand, and of which Rand approved. Branden’s understanding of repression was developed further in his post-Randian work, *The Disowned Self*, which deals not so much with the phenomenon of conscious *suppression* of authentic desire, but with habituated, tacit *repression*, which is far more damaging psychologically. Repression is not “self-discipline” as Firehammer would have it. “Repression is an *automatized avoidance reaction*,” Branden observes, “a subconscious mental process that forbids certain ideas, memories, identifications and evaluations to enter conscious awareness.” It is at the heart of emotional self-alienation, and totally subversive to the process of integration. When Firehammer embraces *repression* as the credo for his sexual manifesto of “normality” and “decency,” he gives us little indication that he actually understands the functions of human psychology or the needs of objectivity that are undermined by repression.

What little indication he does give is precisely the point of my monograph. Firehammer charges that homosexuals are “surrendering their rationality to desire, and pursuing whim, which will ultimately preclude their ever achieving full human happiness.” But, in a flash of insight, he also criticizes homosexuals who seek social approval. “If I were a homosexual, which I cannot even imagine being,” he writes, “there is one thing I do know would be true. The one

thing I would never need or seek would be anyone else’s approval or agreement. If I know something is, ‘right,’ that is all I need to know.” Objecting to homosexual “whining” about alienation, he asks: “Have none of these ‘Objectivist homosexuals’ ever read an Ayn Rand novel?”



Ah. The whole impact of Objectivism on gays and lesbians is a *positive* one insofar as it extols the virtue of individual authenticity. Rand teaches us to articulate the tacit dimensions of consciousness; to check our premises and make them explicit; to understand the source of many of our feelings; to integrate our thoughts and feelings, our minds and bodies; to commit to the apprehension of internal and external reality; to live with integrity and independence. This *fundamental* self-honesty is one of the most important attributes of “coming out.” It is a commitment to reality-based thinking; an unwillingness to live by what others dictate; a commitment to a life free from pain, fear, guilt, or shame—to live “authentically” with no worry about what others think or say with regard to who and what you are. It’s “first-handedness” of the most important kind.

This emphasis on the *individual* is significant; it stands as a bold antidote to the collectivism that is too often found among gay political activists. It also illustrates how profoundly *wrong* Firehammer is when he suggests that my “real mission” is to affirm homosexuality as a “moral virtue.” In and of itself, it is neither virtue nor vice. What matters is the honor and nobility that is possible to *individuals* who choose to live rational and passionate lives—whatever their sexual orientation. And that’s why so many gays and lesbians have benefitted from reading an Ayn Rand novel: it has provided them with the spiritual fuel for genuine *human* liberation.

Side Issues

Before concluding, I’d like to make a few additional observations on several side issues:

1. Toward the end of his book, Firehammer turns toward interesting, but all too brief, discussions of the nature of sexual desire

as “almost entirely associative,” and of the “normality” of fetishism, which highlights the relationship between sexual stimulation and association. It’s a shame that his limited scope didn’t allow him to delve more deeply into these provocative areas of study. I should note, however, that despite these limitations, Firehammer’s references are admirably broad and wide, insofar as he provides linked citations for everything: from Christian ex-gay organizations and Log Cabin Republicans to Objectivist philosophical organizations and resources on pedophilia (though his package-dealing of homosexuality with child molestation has no *factual* basis—there is *no* correlation between these factors, as several studies have suggested).

2. Firehammer discusses part 5 of my five-part series on Objectivism and homosexuality, but tells us he won’t link to the online version of the article because it features a pornographic image of adult film star “Jon Galt.” He says that this image is an “entirely expected and consistent conclusion” to the series. The photograph, in which Mr. Galt’s genitals are not fully exposed, is not printed in my monograph. And if Firehammer had referenced the *monograph*, rather than the print-series upon which the monograph was based, he would have seen that the Galt interview was relocated to the *first* section; it was neither ultimate nor conclusive in its implications. It merely provided an indication of the extent of Rand’s impact on a wide diversity of peoples: lawyers, doctors, novelists, engineers, architects, and even porn stars.

3. Contrary to Firehammer’s assertions, the section in my monograph on “Male Bonding in the Randian Novel” was not an exercise in psychologizing about Rand. It was my attempt to articulate a certain *inconsistency* in Rand’s work, wherein she describes as “romantic” the love between men such as Roark and Wynand, even though she defines romantic love as entailing spiritual and *sexual* components and mind-body integration. I brought attention to these paradoxical characterizations because of the positive response that they have elicited in some gay readers of Rand’s fiction.

4. Firehammer is perturbed by my suggestion that the Nazis systematically targeted male homosexuals; he claims that there were many homosexuals in Nazi ranks. So? If anything, this might explain the psychological repression that often underlies systematic discrimination. The ferocious enforcement of Paragraph 175 of the Reich Penal Code might be viewed as but a symptom of the self-hatred that often fuels the worst of crimes.

5. Firehammer criticizes me because my monograph features interviews of “self-identified Objectivists.” He thinks this

phrase is suspect; why didn't I interview *real* Objectivists? Simply put: I use the phrase "self-identified Objectivists" in the same way that statistical surveyors would use the phrase "self-identified Republicans" or "self-identified Democrats." Self-identification may not always be in sync with reality, but it was not incumbent upon me, in a short work, to evaluate the consistency with Objectivism of every opinion offered by every interview subject. My reporting of common beliefs was journalistic; I was *honest* enough to call relevant survey participants "self-identified Objectivists" because I didn't wish to give the impression that I was "sanctioning" every opinion in the monograph as part and parcel of Objectivist philosophy in the absence of broader evidence or rigorous argumentation. I present *many* views throughout the book without comment—including views with which I disagree. If I had commented on every perspective offered, the monograph would have been four times its current size.

6. Throughout *The Hijacking of a Philosophy*, one finds a relentless attack on my use of dialectical method. Firehammer confesses that his swipe at dialectics was a "rhetorical device," but that my use of dialectics is still not "a correct method of reasoning." He characterizes dialectics as an "anti-rational" concept, but offers no actual *arguments* to support his contention. Indeed, he is not quite sure what is even meant by the term, yet he attacks my monograph as dialectics "in all its fullness and glory."

At one point, he suggests correctly that dialectics entails an injunction against context-dropping, but that "if that is all it means, we really do not need a new term for that." Dialectics is not a new term, however. It's been around for millennia, and it is rooted in the Aristotelian project, upon which I base my defense of the methodology. It certainly does *not* mean, as Firehammer would have it, that one should include "anything in one's reasoning to make the conclusion come out the way one wishes." I have never read such an utter misrepresentation of dialectical method in all my years of studying the subject.

Dialectics is a methodological orientation that requires the use of various techniques for keeping context: by analyzing things from many vantage points and on many different levels of generality, and by extending the units of one's analysis across time and space. Because the very word *dialectic* or *dialektike* is cognate with both *dialogesthai* and *dialogos*, or "dialogue," it is not surprising to find the first manifestations of it in the classical Greek dialogues, which feature give-and-take discussion as the means to wisdom. And because Aristotle himself wrote the first theoretical treatise on dialectics (*The Topics*) that focused on reasoning from *endoxa*, common beliefs or "reputable

opinions," it is also not surprising to discover Firehammer's discomfort with my survey of opinion—given that he dismisses it as purely "anecdotal," even if "instructive." However, it is incorrect to argue, as Firehammer does, that dialectics demands equitable weighing of all opinions "since everything is part of the *context*," including factors that are "totally irrelevant."

By *identifying* and *keeping context*, one is able to distinguish between essential and nonessential factors, and, by extension, between relevant and irrelevant details. But then again, Firehammer has already shown a visceral reaction against any such distinctions, since he seems to believe that *everything* Rand said is *essential* to her Objectivist philosophy.

Firehammer goes so far as to mock me with my own words, taken from a *Full Context* interview, where I stated that dialectics was "not to be confused with such things as logic." That statement was not meant to introduce any opposition between logic and dialectics or to suggest that dialectics was *illogical*. As I argue in my book *Total Freedom*: Logic and dialectics are mutually implied: just as logic is the art of noncontradictory identification, dialectics is the art of context-keeping, and both arts entail various techniques for achieving these mutually reinforcing goals.

Conclusion: On the Evolution of Objectivism

In the end, both my own monograph and Firehammer's response raise key issues about Rand's philosophy. It is clear that we have very different views as to what constitutes Objectivism. As I have argued here, Firehammer believes that Rand's view of homosexuality is *essential* to Objectivism; I reject that proposition.

This is not simply an issue of where one draws the boundaries. It is an issue that speaks to the "open" versus "closed" nature of a philosophy, and the ways in which it evolves over time. Let me explain briefly.

I think there is a great parallel between the evolution of "Objectivism" and the evolution of "scientific socialism." Karl Marx set out the basic principles of his philosophy, which he called "scientific socialism." But the implications and applications of Marx's philosophy have not been known to history as "scientific socialism." They have been grouped under the general title of "Marxism." And in the history of thought, Marxism has undergone many transformations—e.g., combinations

with Hegel, Aristotle, Freud, Sartre, even Nietzsche. In essentials, though, among all the permutations—the "revisionist" Marxists, the Marxist-Leninists, the Trotskyites, the Maoists, the Frankfurt-school theorists, the analytic Marxists, etc.—there is a "core" that makes *all* of them identifiably Marxist.

In *essentials*, every "philosophy"—be it "scientific socialism" or "Objectivism"—is, by necessity, *closed*: It must be something definite, or it is not definable; it must have *identity* and it must have *boundaries* or there will be no way of distinguishing one doctrine from another. But as David Kelley suggests in *Truth and Toleration*, every philosophy is, by necessity, *open* to interpretation, which leads to the formation of a "school of thought" or "tradition," wherein thinkers who accept the fundamentals work out interesting implications, applications, and even *combinations* among different doctrines. And the "working out" is then subject to critique, in an even broader intellectual community, as we argue over whose version is more in keeping not only with the philosophy, but, more importantly, with reality. There is thus a dynamic tension between investigatory and what might be called "hermeneutical" (or interpretive) aspects throughout the history of philosophy.

Interestingly, in the face of such heretical, hermeneutical innovations, not even Marx liked what was being done to his "scientific socialism." Upon hearing statements made by some "Marxist" ideologues, Marx replied: "But I am not a Marxist." Rand expressed sympathy for Marx and echoed his sentiments by saying, in essence, "I am not a Randist"—when she heard of some of the "philosophical hodgepodge[s]" being perpetuated in her name.

If one adopts Firehammer's perspective, which would identify Objectivism with strict adherence to every proposition ever uttered by Rand, then there has been only one "Objectivist" who has ever existed in history. Nietzsche once observed, similarly, with regard to Christ and Christianity: "In truth, there was only one Christian, and he died on the cross" (*The Antichrist*).

It is not our intention to transform "The Passion of Ayn Rand" into "The Passion of the Christ." Rand need not be foisted onto the crucifix of philosophical hodgepodes that she repudiated. But if Firehammer is right, then Objectivism is dead and we are all Randians now—"Randian" is, of course, a wide designation, meaning "of, relating to, or resembling" Rand's philosophic framework—since every act of personal interpretation or application by anyone on any subject is a step removed from Rand's formally enunciated philosophy.

On this basis, I'm not "hijacking" Objectivism at all. I'm adhering to the old Spanish proverb that says: "Take what you want, and pay for it." I'm taking what I want from Rand's legacy, and paying for it—by assuming responsibility for my own interpretations and applications. Call me a Randian or a post-Randian or a neo-Objectivist or an advocate of Objectivism 2.0, or even the founder of Sciabarra-ism. But don't call me an Objectivist. I agree with Rand's core principles. But I have never argued that my own innovations (on subjects like dialectics or homosexuality) are part of "Objectivism" as Rand—or even Firehammer—defines it. Yes, I do believe that my own viewpoint is fully consistent with Objectivism. And on the subject of dialectics, for example, I've even argued that Rand herself was a dialectician as I've defined it. But I would never argue that Rand embraced "dialectics" as such, explicitly and by that name. Ultimately, I believe that I'm carrying on Rand's legacy in many substantive ways and the burden is on me to prove it.

What I've stated here is fairly straightforward and self-evident, for this is all in the nature of intellectual development. An innovator puts forth a doctrine. Over time, that doctrine is adapted, interpreted, and applied to various issues and experiences of which the innovator never could have dreamed. Some of the approaches will resonate with us; others won't.

It was Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese authoritarian communist, who said, ironically: "Let a hundred flowers bloom: let a hundred schools of thought contend"—despite the fact that his Cultural Revolution was geared toward crushing all the flowers and creating an ideological monolith. The creation of a monolith, however, is the *decadence* and *death* of a tradition, which is why orthodox approaches are almost always sclerotic in their effect. The full flowering of differentiated approaches to Objectivism is not a sign of decay; it is a sign of the tradition's life and vibrance. And as Marx would have said, it is an *inexorable* development.

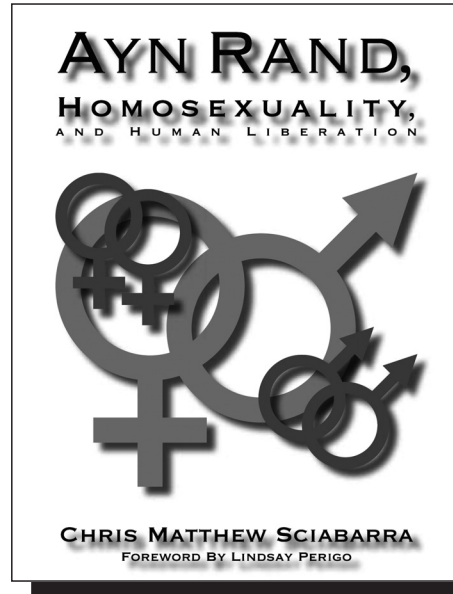
Paraphrasing Rand's conclusion from her essay, "For the New Intellectual," we might say: "There is an ancient slogan that applies to our present position: 'The king is dead—long live the king!' We can say, with the same dedication to the future: 'The Objectivists are dead—long live the Objectivists!'"—and then proceed to fulfill the responsibility which that honorable title had once implied."

On these grounds, I would say it is our *responsibility* to "hijack" Rand's legacy of reality, rationality, and radicalism and to apply it to the context of our own lives.

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