

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## Ayn Rand, 1905-1982

John W. Robbins

*On March 6, novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand died at her apartment in New York City. Rand, a Russian immigrant, influenced thousands of people – particularly college students – through her many books expressing her ethical and political ideas. She is correctly regarded as one of the moving forces behind the contemporary libertarian movement. In 1974, Answer to Ayn Rand, a comprehensive analysis of her philosophy, was published. Below are excerpts from the last chapter, "The Philosophy of Objectivism."*

In *Who Is Ayn Rand?* Nathaniel Branden boasted: No one has dared publicly to name the essential ideas of *Atlas Shrugged* and to attempt to refute them. With the publication of this book, that statement no longer stands. The clarification and refutation of Rand's ideas attempted in this book have proceeded simultaneously; in large part, their clarification is their refutation.

Rand once summarized her philosophy while standing on one foot; we might do the same, summarizing the logical conclusions of her premises:

Metaphysics: Indestructible Matter

Epistemology: Skepticism

Ethics: Hedonism

Politics: Anarchism

Her metaphysics, as I have carefully documented, consists of a belief in the primacy of indestructible matter. Her epistemology, sensation plus abstraction, leads only to skepticism, not to knowledge. Chapter two is a digest of the many ambiguities and difficulties in Rand's epistemological theory which concludes with Branden's admission that even though all the evidence might point to a specific conclusion, one can never be sure. The next bit of evidence may overturn the conclusion. This, of course, is skepticism.

Rand's ethics, being founded on an amoral choice, not on the "facts of reality," results in hedonism. Then her entire ethical edifice collapses because she has built it on a non-existent bridge across Hume's gap.

Her politics, deriving from her theory of the sovereign individual, leads straightway to anarchism, not to a society or state, but to a "voluntary association of men acting only in their individual self-interest."

It is indeed indicative of the bankruptcy of modern American philosophy that Rand's Objectivism could go so long unchallenged and be so fervently accepted by so many. Like Plato and Aristotle, she has sought to confute the sophists, only to originate a philosophy that confirms the perennial sophistry of secular philosophy. *Philosophia perennis* is, ultimately, but futile speculation designed to show

that man and man's mind are indeed autonomous and independent of their Creator. Secular human philosophy, like secular theories of history, is cyclical: It turns from great theoretical systems giving a comprehensive view of reality to critiques of these systems, which critiques then result in skepticism. When the depths of skepticism are reached, some new philosopher erects another magnificent edifice of human thought, only to have that edifice eroded by the logical criticisms of other scholars, resulting in a new skepticism. So the cycle turns, from the sophists to a Plato, from Plato to the sophists; from the sophists to a Thomas, from Thomas to the sophists; from the sophists to a Spinoza, from Spinoza to the sophists; from the sophists to a Kant, from Kant to the sophists; from the sophists to a Hegel, from Hegel to the sophists. One might conclude that secular philosophy is but the history of failure; that men who try to erect a Tower unto Heaven, are soon scattered upon the earth unable to understand each other.

The cyclical nature of the history of philosophy is, of course, extremely oversimplified as presented here; but then this book is not designed to be a text on the history of philosophy; it is merely a critique of one of the latest figures in the cycle of secular philosophy. A student of philosophy might soon question why all secular philosophies have failed to withstand logical scrutiny, why the cycle of epistemological optimism and pessimism has existed for well over 2000 years. The reason can hardly be because of the superstructure of the various philosophies that are so diverse as not to furnish a common explanation. One ought to examine the infrastructures of the various philosophies, and there one finds a common element: the autonomy of man's mind. All secular philosophies share the axiom of autonomy, the belief that man's unaided intellect can arrive at knowledge. Objectivism is no exception. Yet the repeated failures have not resulted in a repudiation of this axiom, only in more determined efforts to reach knowledge *via* man's own efforts. Lessing's famous alternative, between accepting truth from the hand of God as a gift and eternally searching for, but never finding, truth, is the alternative faced by all thinkers and all secular thinkers have chosen an eternal, endless, and futile quest, just as Lessing

did. The choice as outlined by Lessing is a choice that must be made by all men. Shall I accept revelation or not? Is the Bible the Word of God or not? Non-Christian philosophers (and some inconsistent Christian philosophers) have chosen the futile search. Many believe that the search is not futile at all (particularly the inconsistent Christian thinkers, like Thomas), but will one day succeed. Unfortunately, after two and one-half thousand years of searching, no man has yet established truth *via* his unaided intellect. Objectivism has not changed that fact, for it shares the axiom of autonomy with other secular philosophies. It, too, will be eclipsed by a new surge of skepticism, and rightly so, for it has furnished no good reasons for believing in the ability of the human mind to create a system of knowledge.

One supposes that after the scattering of the builders of the Tower of Babel, those who spoke the same language attempted again to erect other towers, and failed. The antipathy of the human mind to accepting a gift from God, revealed propositional knowledge, is ever present. It is the explanation for the cycle of secular philosophy. Faced with the alternative to accepting knowledge as a gift of God and finding knowledge on his own, the rebellious human being will always refuse the gift of knowledge and seek to erect his own philosophical system, his own Tower unto Heaven.

As a Christian, one can only hope that Objectivism, like all other philosophical facades, will soon crumble, and reveal to the men of the twentieth century the utter futility of secular philosophies. This book has been written with the purpose of speeding the demise of this newest form of secular philosophical optimism, so that men maybe forced to admit that the choice is nihilism or Christianity; skepticism or revelation. The choice is not, as Rand has said, between Communism and Objectivism, for those two philosophies are actually quite similar: Both are materialistic, both are empiricist, and ultimately, both are anarchistic. Rand escaped physically from the Communists in the mid 1920's, but she has never escaped intellectually from the Communists. Rather than being diametrically opposed, Objectivism and Communism share common premises, and attack a common foe,

Christianity. Here the antithesis is unmistakable: God or Matter? Propositional revelation or sensation? God's law or man's whim? Limited government or totalitarian anarchy? Only one system challenges Communism in all its ramifications, and that system is not Objectivism. That system is Christianity.

*One of the ways in which the damned will be confounded is that they will see themselves condemned by their own reason, by which they claim to condemn the Christian religion.*

Pascal Pensees

## The Horror File

### Political Philosophy

*Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

MOSCOW, May 9 – Evangelist Billy Graham preached a message for disarmament in Moscow's only Baptist church today as a hymn-singing overflow crowd held an extraordinary service behind the police barricades in the street outside.

In his sermon Graham told the 1,000 worshipers that while their first commitment was to Jesus Christ they must also remember that the Bible calls on them to "obey the authorities." Speaking on a major Soviet public holiday – the anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany – he sought to use the memory of U.S.-Soviet wartime friendship for a new joint disarmament effort. "At that time the United States and the Soviet Union were allies against Nazi Germany," he said. "Now we have another common enemy – the possibility of a nuclear holocaust."

At the end of his 45-minute sermon, which was simultaneously translated into Russian, a woman in her early twenties unfurled a banner from the balcony reading, in English, "We have more than 150 prisoners for the work of the Gospel." The banner apparently referred to Baptists who have been imprisoned for preaching and holding services without permission. Another banner, also in

English, was simultaneously raised in the aisle directly in front of Graham. It read, "Deliver those who are driven away to death."

Graham said later he did not read the messages. He also declined to approach about 250 people outside the church, many of whom said they traveled hundreds of miles to hear him speak but could not enter the church without tickets. An aide to the evangelist said privately that Graham did not want to offend his hosts during his one-week visit because "he wants to develop this relationship," implying that he expects to return to the Soviet Union presumably for a preaching tour.

Religious services outside registered churches are forbidden in the Soviet Union, and several believers said a service in a Moscow street had not been heard of since the 1917 Communist Revolution.

The woman who unfurled her banner in the church was detained by plainclothes officers after the service. It was not known whether she was released. The service, originally planned for this evening, was rescheduled for 8 a.m., apparently because that was the time Voice of America erroneously announced it would be held.

During his sermon and later in an address at services at the Yelohovski Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Graham did not mention religious or human rights. Instead, he told the audience, "God can make you love people you normally would not love. He gives you the power to be a better worker, a more loyal citizen because in *Romans* 13 we are told to obey the authorities."

Both churches were heavily guarded with police sealing off all roads leading to them. Hundreds of KGB security agents, mostly young and well dressed, were in the congregation that included a large number of foreigners. Only about one-third of the people were local worshipers; most of them were women. Graham and numerous other churchmen are here for a conference opening Monday that will discuss reducing the threat of nuclear war. The conference is organized by the Russian Orthodox Church, which is paying the bills for more than 400 foreign visitors representing many religious groups from all parts of the world.

Perhaps because of his prominence in the United States, Graham is regarded as a star attraction at the conference. He has been allotted 20 minutes for his speech instead of the 10 minute slots all other churchmen were allowed. He also is being driven around Moscow in a Chaika limousine while the others are shepherded around in a fleet of buses. In contrast with the somewhat austere atmosphere at the Baptist church, Graham spoke at a splendid service in the Yelohovski Cathedral with bearded bishops in rich vestments led by Pimen, patriarch of all the Russians, in attendance. It is unclear whether Graham plans to see six Russian Baptists who took refuge in the U.S. Embassy here more than three years ago. They are seeking to emigrate on grounds that they were victims of religious persecution. There are 500,000 Baptists in the Soviet Union, many of whom are members of unregistered and therefore illegal congregations. Moscow's official Baptist community numbers about 5,000.

– *The Washington Post*

### **Theology**

*For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.*

The Mansfield Kaseman case – of a Presbyterian minister overwhelmingly welcomed by National Capital-Union presbytery (with a larger proportion of PCUS votes than of UPCUSA votes) – is about to be put to rest with a decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Piedmont of the UPCUSA. Opponents of Mr. Kaseman, who refuses to affirm most of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, appealed his reception from the United Church of Christ (perhaps the most liberal of the major denominations in America) for the second time to the top appeals court in the UPCUSA.

The heart of the commission's lengthy decision was to the point: "[The Presbytery of National Capital-Union], after careful deliberation, acted reasonably in determining that Mr. Kaseman's answers to (questions) about the Trinity were sufficient in depth and meaning to satisfy their query." Of singular importance in the whole affair was the Commission's own reflection upon the doctrinal position of the United Presbyterian Church USA.

The statement calls for careful pondering: "The arguments presented by both parties to this case force us to recognize that there are several valid ways of interpreting the creedal symbols and the confessions of our faith. Theological pluralism is a reality which is both desirable and present in our midst. Whether one begins his/her quest for truth with faith and experience as the path that leads to knowledge (creedal or otherwise), or whether one begins the quest with knowledge (creeds) that leads to faith, is not an important issue. There is room in the church for both approaches to reality and for the honest differences of opinion that will result. Tolerance is called for – tolerance, sympathy, understanding and mutual respect and love in Christ. Mere differences in methodology of Bible study, in theological investigation and in opinions need not divide or polarize the church. Jesus Christ and the realities of the Christian faith are far too big and broad and gracious to be confined within the limits of human thoughts and creeds. We must be instructed and guided by the creeds in our quest for truth, but we must not stop with that. Led by our living Lord we must go on and find and test and confirm the creeds in our own ways – in our own experience, if we as a church and as individuals are finally to know the truth that will set us free forever. This is the approach which Mr. Kaseman has chosen to follow. National Capital-Union presbytery has attested to its validity. The commission believes that it is valid and in accord with the basic tenets of our Reformed tradition."

– *The Presbyterian Journal*

### **Epistemology**

*To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth – and not I only, but also all who know the truth – because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever.*

Can one really be satisfied with Robert Reymond's assertion (with Gordon Clark) that reality conforms to the law of noncontradiction when the Bible is so full of seeming paradoxes wherein a thing is both A and non-A, e.g. God is both three and one, Jesus is both man and God, the Bible is both the word of God and the words of men, etc. Finally, can one

maintain an ontological qualitative distinction between God and man and reject an epistemological distinction between God and man? We think not. First, a fact exists and has meaning in its total context which only God can know. Therefore, only God can truly know a fact.

– Leonard J. Coppes *Blue Banner Faith and Life*

### **Education**

*Then you will know the truth...*

I also include as one of the chief distinctive features of the Christian school that in agreement with what Scripture teaches in regard to the limitations of human understanding and the darkening of the intellect, the school does not hesitate to impart incomprehensible material to the child.

T. van der Kooy,

*The Distinctive Features of the Christian School*