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THE OBJECTIVIST

Edited by AYN RAND
and NATHANIEL BRANDEN

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THE WRECKAGE OF THE CONSENSUS

By Ayn Rand

(This is the second and final part of a lecture given at The Ford Hall Forum, Boston, on April 16, 1967.)

The institution that enables our leaders to indulge in such recklessly irresponsible ventures is the military draft.

The question of the draft is, perhaps, the most important single issue debated today. But the terms in which it is being debated are a sorry manifestation of our anti-ideological "mainstream."

Of all the statist violations of individual rights in a mixed economy, the military draft is the worst. It is an abrogation of rights. It negates man's fundamental right—the right to life—and establishes the fundamental principle of statism: that a man's life belongs to the state, and the state may claim it by compelling him to sacrifice it in battle. Once that principle is accepted, the rest is only a matter of time.

If the state may force a man to risk death or hideous maiming and crippling, in a war declared at the state's discretion, for a cause he may neither approve of nor even understand, if his consent is not required to send him into unspeakable martyrdom—then, in principle, all rights are negated in that state, and its government is not man's protector any longer. What else is there left to protect?

The most immoral contradiction—in the chaos of today's anti-ideological groups—is that of the so-called "conservatives," who posture as defenders of individual rights, particularly *property* rights, but uphold and advocate the draft. By what infernal evasion can they hope to justify the proposition that creatures who have no right to life, have the right to a bank account? A slightly higher—though not much higher—rung of hell should be reserved for those "liberals" who claim that man has the "right" to economic security, public housing, medical care, education, recreation, but no right to life, or: that man has the right to *livelihood*, but not to *life*.

One of the notions used by all sides to justify the draft, is that "rights impose obligations." Obligations, to whom?—and imposed, by whom? Ideologically, that notion is worse than the evil it attempts to justify: it implies that rights are a gift from the state, and that a man has to buy them by offering something (his life) in return. Logically, that notion is a contradiction: since the only proper function of a government is to protect man's rights, it cannot claim title to his life in exchange for that protection.

The only "obligation" involved in individual rights is an obligation imposed, not by the state, but by the nature of reality (i.e., by the law of identity): *consistency*, which, in this case, means the obligation to respect the rights of others, if one wishes one's own rights to be recognized and protected.

Politically, the draft is clearly unconstitutional. No amount of rationalization, neither by the Supreme Court nor by private individuals, can alter the fact that it represents "involuntary servitude."

A volunteer army is the only proper, moral—and practical—way to defend a free country. Should a man volunteer to fight, if his country is attacked? Yes—if he values his own rights and freedom. A free (or even semi-free) country has never lacked volunteers in the face of foreign aggression. Many military authorities have testified that a volunteer army—an army of men who know what they are fighting for and why—is the best, most effective army, and that a drafted one is the least effective.

It is often asked: But what if a country cannot find a sufficient number of volunteers? Even so, this would not give the rest of the population a right to the lives of the country's young men. But, in fact, the lack of volunteers occurs for one of two reasons: (1) If a country is demoralized by a corrupt, authoritarian government, its citizens will not volunteer to defend it. But neither will they fight for long, if drafted. For example, observe the literal disintegration of the Czarist Russian army in World War I. (2) If a country's government undertakes to fight a war for some reason other than self-defense, for a purpose which the citizens neither share nor understand, it will not find many volunteers. Thus a volunteer army is one of the best protectors of peace, not only against foreign aggression, but also against any warlike ideologies or projects on the part of a country's own government.

Not many men would volunteer for such wars as Korea or Vietnam. Without the power to draft, the makers of our foreign policy would not be able to embark on adventures of that kind. This is one of the best practical reasons for the abolition of the draft.

Consider another practical reason. The age of large, mass armies is past. A modern war is a war of *technology*; it requires a highly trained, scientific personnel, not hordes of passive, unthinking, bewildered men; it requires brains, not brawn—intelligence, not blind obedience. One can force men to die; one cannot force them to think. Observe that the more technological branches of our armed services—such as the Navy and the Air Force—do not accept draftees and are made up of volunteers. The draft, therefore, applies only to the least efficacious and—in today's conditions—the least essential part of our armed forces: the infantry. If so, then is national defense the main consideration of those who advocate and uphold the draft?

The practical question of the country's military protection is *not* the issue at stake; it is not the chief concern of the draft's supporters. Some of them may be motivated by routine, traditional notions and fears; but, on a national scale, there is a deeper motive involved.

When a vicious principle is accepted implicitly, it does not take long to become explicit: pressure groups are quick to find practical advantages in its logical implications. For instance, in World War II, the military draft was used as a justification for proposals to establish labor conscrip-

tion—i.e., compulsory labor service for the entire population, with the government empowered to assign anyone to any job of its choice. "If men can be drafted to die for their country," it was argued, "why can't they be drafted to work for their country?" Two bills embodying such proposals were introduced in Congress, but, fortunately, were defeated. The second of those bills had an interesting quirk: drafted labor, it proposed, would be paid a union scale of wages—in order not to undercut union scales—but, in "fairness" to the military draftees, the labor draftees would be given only the equivalent of army pay, and the rest of their wages would go to the government. (!)

What political group, do you suppose, came up with a notion of this kind? Both bills were introduced by Republicans—and were defeated by organized labor, which was the only large economic group standing between us and a totalitarian state.

Now observe the terms in which the draft is being debated today. The main reason advanced for the continuation of the draft is not military, but financial. (!) It is generally conceded that the draft is unnecessary, but, it is argued, a volunteer army would cost too much.

As matters stand, the army is one of the lowest paid groups in the country; a drafted soldier's pay, in cash or equivalent (i.e., including room and board), amounts to about *one dollar* an hour. To attract volunteers, it would be necessary to offer higher pay and better conditions, thus making an army career comparable to the standards of the civilian labor market.

No exact estimates of the cost of a volunteer army have been offered, but the approximate estimates place it at about four billion dollars a year.

Hold this figure in mind. Hold it while you read about our national budget in the daily papers—and while you hold also, clearly and specifically, the image of what this figure would buy.

The years from about fifteen to twenty-five are the crucial formative years of a man's life. This is the time when he confirms his impressions of the world, of other men, of the society in which he is to live, when he acquires conscious convictions, defines his moral values, chooses his goals, and plans his future, developing or renouncing ambition. These are the years that mark him for life. And it is *these* years that an allegedly humanitarian society forces him to spend in terror—the terror of knowing that he can plan nothing and count on nothing, that any road he takes can be blocked at any moment by an unpredictable power, that, barring his vision of the future, there stands the gray shape of the barracks, and, perhaps, beyond it, death for some unknown reason in some alien jungle.

A pressure of that kind is devastating to a young man's psychology, if he grasps the issue consciously—and still worse, if he doesn't.

The first thing he is likely to give up, in either case, is his intellect: an intellect does not function on the premise of its own impotence. If he acquires the conviction that existence is hopeless, that his life is in the hands of some enormous, incomprehensible evil, if he develops a helpless,

searing contempt for the hypocrisy of his elders, and a profound hatred for all mankind—if he seeks to escape from that inhuman psychological pressure by turning to the beatnik cult of the immediate moment, by screaming: “Now, now, now!” (he has nothing else but that “now”), or by dulling his terror and killing the last of his mind with LSD—don’t blame him. Brothers, you asked for it!

This is what four billion dollars would buy—this is what it would spare him and every other young man in the country and every person who loves them. Remember down what drains our money is being poured today: according to the Federal budget for fiscal year 1968, we will spend 4.5 billion on foreign aid and allied projects, 5.3 billion on space programs, 11.3 billion on just one of the many, many departments dealing with public welfare—yet we claim that we cannot afford four billion dollars to save our youth from the agony of a mangling, brutalizing psychological torture.

But, of course, the real motive behind that social crime is not financial; the issue of costs is merely a rationalization. The real motive may be detected in the following statement made by Lt. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, Director of the Selective Service System, on June 24, 1966: “I am not concerned with the uncertainty involved in keeping our citizenry believing that they owe something to their country. There are too many, too many people that think individualism has to be completely recognized, even if the group rights go to the devil.”

The same motive was made fully clear in a proposal which was advanced by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and is now being plugged with growing insistence by the press.

On May 18, 1966, Mr. McNamara said the following: “As matters stand, our present Selective system draws on only a minority of eligible young men. That is an inequity. It seems to me that we could move toward remedying that inequity by asking every young person in the United States to give two years of service to his country—whether in one of the military services, in the Peace Corps or in some other volunteer developmental work at home or abroad.”

“Developmental” work—devoted to *whose* development?

Apparently, planting rice or digging ditches in Asia, Africa and South America, constitutes service to the United States—but preparing oneself for a productive career, does not. Teaching our own illiterates in hill-billy regions or city slums, constitutes service to the United States—but going to college does not. Teaching retarded children to weave baskets, constitutes service to the United States—but acquiring a Ph.D. does not.

Isn’t the unnamed principle clear? Developing yourself into a productive, ambitious, *independent* person, is not regarded as a value to the United States; turning yourself into an abject sacrificial animal, is.

This, I submit, is a moral obscenity.

Whatever country such a principle could apply to, it is *not* the United States. It is not even Soviet Russia—where they do destroy the minds of

their youth, but not in so mawkishly, wantonly senseless a manner.

That proposal represents the naked essence of *altruism* in its pure and fully consistent form. It does not seek to sacrifice men for the alleged benefit of the state—it seeks to sacrifice them *for the sake of sacrifice*. It seeks to break man’s spirit—to destroy his mind, his ambition, his self-esteem, his self-confidence, his *self*, during the very years when he is in the process of acquiring them.

Mr. McNamara’s trial balloon did not go over too well, at first. There were outcries of protest and indignation, which compelled the government to issue a hasty disclaimer. “The Johnson Administration,” said *The New York Times* of May 20, 1966, “quickly made it plain today that it had no plans to draft young Americans for civilian duty or to let such duty become an alternative to military service.” The same news story said that “officials called upon to interpret his [McNamara’s] words stressed that he had suggested ‘asking’ rather than ‘compelling’ young people to serve.” Well, I want to stress that if a government intends to “ask” rather than “compel,” it does not choose the Secretary of Defense to do the “asking,” and he does not “ask” it in the context of a passage dealing with the military draft.

The suggestion of “voluntary service” under a threat to one’s life, is *blackmail*—blackmail directed at the entire American youth—blackmail demanding their surrender into explicit serfdom.

After that initial suggestion—obviously, as an intermediary step, to “condition” the sacrificial animals—the statist-altruist gangs began to plug the notion of “voluntary” social service. On September 14, 1966, James Reston of *The New York Times*, quoted President Johnson as saying: “I hope to see a day when some form of voluntary service to the community and the nation and the world is as common in America as going to school; when no man has truly lived who only served himself.”

The motivation of all this is obvious. The draft is not needed for military purposes, it is not needed for the protection of this country, but the statists are struggling not to relinquish the power it gave them and the unnamed principle (and precedent) it established—above all, not to relinquish the principle: that man’s life belongs to the state.

This is the real issue—and the only issue—and there is no way to fight it or to achieve the abolition of the draft except by upholding the principle of man’s right to his own life. There is no way to uphold that right without a full, consistent, moral-political ideology. But that is not the way the issue is now debated by the frantic anti-ideologists of all sides.

It is the “conservatives,” the alleged defenders of freedom and capitalism, who should be opposing the draft. They are not; they are supporting it. Early in the presidential election campaign of 1964, Barry Goldwater made a vague suggestion favoring the abolition of the draft, which aroused the public’s hopeful attention; he promptly dropped it, and devoted his campaign to denouncing the morals of Bobby Baker. Who brought the issue of the draft into public focus and debate, demanding its repeal? The

extreme left—the Vietniks and Peaceniks.

In line with the anti-ideological methods of all other groups, the Vietniks—whose sympathies are on the side of Russia, China and North Vietnam—are screaming against the draft in the name of their “individual rights”—individual rights, believe it or not. They are proclaiming their right to choose which war they'll fight in—while sympathizing with countries where the individual does not even have the right to choose and utter a thought of his own. What is still worse is the fact that they are the only group that even mentions individual rights (if newspaper reports are to be trusted).

But of all this anti-ideological mess, I would pick one small incident as, morally, the worst. I quote from *The New York Times* of February 6, 1967: “Leaders of 15 student organizations representing both political extremes as well as the center called today for the abolition of the draft and the encouragement of voluntary service in humanitarian pursuits. In a resolution ending a two-day conference on the draft and national service at the Shoreham Hotel [Washington, D.C.], the student leaders declared: ‘The present draft system with its inherent injustices is incompatible with traditional American principles of individual freedom within a democratic society, and for this reason the draft should be eliminated. An urgent need exists within our society for young people to become involved in the elimination of such social ills as ignorance, poverty, racial discrimination and war.’ Among those who signed the resolution were leading members of the leftwing Students for a Democratic Society, the rightwing Young Americans for Freedom, and the moderate Youth and College Division of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. . . . Although no unanimity on concrete recommendations was arrived at, Mr. Chickering [the sponsor of the conference] said he believed that most of the student leaders favored his proposal for the creation of a system of voluntary national service. Under this proposal . . . students at campuses throughout the country will be asked to fill out cards expressing their willingness to serve in humanitarian work.”

(Observe the formulation “traditional American principles of individual freedom within a democratic society”—instead of “individual right to life.” What is “individual freedom within a democratic society”? What is a “democratic society”? “Individual freedom” is not a primary political principle and cannot be defined, defended or practiced without the primary principle of individual rights. And a “democratic society,” *traditionally*, means: unlimited majority rule. This is an example of the method by which today's anti-ideologists are obliterating the concept of rights. Observe also that the leaders of the “conservative” Young Americans for Freedom signed a document of that kind.)

These are not men who are being whipped: these are men who take the lash obediently and whip themselves.

Politically, that proposal is much worse than the draft. The draft, at least, offers the excuse that one is serving one's own country in time of

danger—and its political implications are diluted by a long historical tradition associated with patriotism. But if young men accept the belief that it is their duty to spend their irreplaceable formative years on growing rice and carrying bedpans—they're done for psychologically, and so is this country.

The same news story carried some shocking statistics on the attitude of college students at large. It quoted a poll conducted by the National Students Association at twenty-three campuses throughout the country. If that poll is to be trusted, “Approximately 75 per cent said they preferred the establishment of some means to allow work in the Peace Corps, the Teacher Corps or Volunteers in Service to America as an alternative to military service. About 90 per cent, however, said they believed that the Government has a right to conscript its citizens, and 68 per cent thought such conscription was necessary in periods other than those of a declared national emergency.”

This is an example, on a grand scale, of what I call “the sanction of the victim.” It is also an example of the fact that men cannot be enslaved politically until they have been disarmed ideologically. When they are so disarmed, it is the victims who take the lead in the process of their own destruction.

Such is the swamp of contradictions swallowing the two most immediately prominent issues of today—Vietnam and the draft. The same is true of all the other issues and pseudo-issues now clogging all the avenues of public communication. And, adding insult to injury, the anti-ideologists, who are responsible for it, are complaining about the public's lethargy.

Lethargy is only a precarious psychological cover for confusion, disgust and despair.

The country at large is bitterly dissatisfied with the status quo, disillusioned with the stale slogans of welfare statism, and desperately seeking an alternative, i.e., an intelligible program and course. The intensity of that need may be gauged by the fact that a single good speech raised a man, who had never held public office, to the governorship of California. The statists of both parties, who are now busy smearing Governor Reagan, are anxious not to see and not to let others discover the real lesson and meaning of his election: that the country is starved for a voice of consistency, clarity and moral self-confidence—which were the outstanding qualities of his famous speech, and which cannot be achieved or projected by consensus-seeking anti-ideologists.

As of this date, Governor Reagan seems to be a promising public figure—I do not know him and cannot speak for the future. It is difficult to avoid a certain degree of skepticism: we have been disappointed too often. But whether he lives up to the promise or not, the people's need, quest for and response to clear-cut ideas remain a fact—and will become a tragic fact if the intellectual leaders of this country continue to ignore it.

Since the elections of 1966, some commentators have been talking about the country's “swing to the right.” There was no swing to the right

(except, perhaps, in California)—there was only a swing against the left (if by “right,” we mean capitalism—and by “left,” statism). Without a firm, consistent *ideological* program and leadership, the people’s desperate protest will be dissipated in the blind alleys of the same statism that they are opposing. It is futile to fight *against*, if one does not know what one is fighting *for*. A merely negative trend or movement cannot win and, historically, has never won: it leads nowhere.

The consensus-doctrine has achieved the exact opposite of its alleged goal: instead of creating unity or agreement, it has disintegrated and atomized the country to such an extent that no communication, let alone agreement, is possible. It is not unity, but intellectual coherence that a country needs. That coherence can be achieved only by fundamental principles, not by compromises among groups of men—by the primacy of ideas, not of gangs.

The task of defining ideas and goals is not the province of politicians and is not accomplished at election time: elections are merely consequences. The task belongs to the intellectuals. The need is more urgent than ever.

(*Postscript to our readers.* Once in a while, I receive letters from young men asking me for personal advice on problems connected with the draft. Morally, no one can give advice in any issue where choices and decisions are not voluntary: “Morality ends where a gun begins.” As to the practical alternatives available, the best thing to do is to consult a good lawyer.

There is, however, one moral aspect of the issue that needs clarification. Some young men seem to labor under the misapprehension that since the draft is a violation of their rights, compliance with the draft law would constitute a moral sanction of that violation. This is a serious error. A forced compliance is not a sanction. All of us are forced to comply with many laws that violate our rights, but so long as we advocate the repeal of such laws, our compliance does not constitute a sanction. Unjust laws have to be fought ideologically; they cannot be fought or corrected by means of mere disobedience and futile martyrdom. To quote from an editorial on this subject in the April 1967 issue of *Persuasion*: “One does not stop the juggernaut by throwing oneself in front of it . . .”)

SELF-ESTEEM

By Nathaniel Branden

(Part III of a five-part article)*

Self-esteem is the reputation a man acquires with himself.

The policies by which a man determines the state of his self-esteem are

*(Correction: last month we erroneously announced that this article consisted of three parts.)

formed gradually across time; they are not the product of the choices of a single moment or issue. The collapse of self-esteem is not reached in a day, a week or a month: it is the cumulative result of a long succession of defaults, evasions and irrationalities—a long succession of failures to use one’s mind properly.

In the process of his psychological growth and development, a human being creates his own character; he does not do so self-consciously or by explicit intention; he does so by means of the volitional choices he makes day by day. The nature and implications of these choices are summed up subconsciously—with his brain functioning, in effect, as an electronic computer—and the sum is his character and his sense of himself.

A child does not commit himself to the will to understand, in explicit terms. But in issue after issue that falls within the range of his awareness, he strives to achieve the fullest clarity and intelligibility possible to him—and thus acquires a mental habit, a policy of dealing with reality, which can be identified conceptually as the will to understand. It is a policy that he must re-affirm volitionally in each new issue he encounters, for as long as he lives; it always remains a matter of choice.

Similarly, a child does not *decide*, as a matter of principle, to relinquish the will to efficacy and abnegate the authority of his mind under the pressure of fears. But in a long series of individual situations, faced with the alternative of struggling for mental clarity and control or letting his mind be filled and overcome by a fear he had the power to surmount, he defaults on the responsibility of thought and concedes supremacy to his emotions—and, as a consequence, builds a sense of helplessness into his psychology, which comes to feel more and more “natural” and is experienced as “just me.”

The choices a human being makes, with regard to the operation of his consciousness, do not simply vanish, leaving no trace behind them. These choices have long-term psychological consequences. The way a man chooses to deal with reality registers in his mind, for good or for bad: it either confirms and strengthens his self-esteem or it undermines and depletes it. The fact that man cannot escape from the judgment of his own ego, is entailed by his power of self-consciousness—by the fact that he is the one species able to appraise and regulate his own mental processes.

The concept of self-esteem must be distinguished from the concept of pride. The two are related, but there are significant differences in their meaning. Self-esteem pertains to a man’s conviction of his fundamental efficacy and worth. Pride pertains to the pleasure a man takes in himself on the basis of and in response to *specific* achievements or actions. Self-esteem is confidence in one’s capacity to achieve values. Pride is the consequence of having achieved some particular value(s). Self-esteem is “I can.” Pride is “I have.” A man can take pride in his actions in reality, i.e., in his existential achievements, and in the qualities he has achieved in his own character. The deepest pride a man can experience is that which results from his achievement of self-esteem: since self-esteem is a value that

has to be earned, the man who does so feels proud of his attainment.

If, in spite of his best efforts, a man fails in a particular undertaking, he does not experience the same emotion of pride that he would feel if he had succeeded; but, if he is rational, *his self-esteem is unaffected and unimpaired*. His self-esteem is not—or should not be—dependent on *particular* successes or failures, since these are not necessarily in a man's direct, volitional control and/or not in his exclusive control.

The failure to understand this principle causes an incalculable amount of unnecessary anguish and self-doubt. If a man judges himself by criteria that entail factors outside his volitional control, the result, unavoidably, is a precarious self-esteem that is in chronic jeopardy.

For example, a man finds himself in a situation where it would be highly desirable for him to possess certain knowledge; but he does not possess it—not because of evasion or irresponsibility, but because he had seen no reason to acquire it, or had not known how to acquire it, or because the means to acquire it were not available to him. In reason, such a man has no grounds to reproach himself for inadequacy or moral failure. Yet he does so, telling himself that “somehow” he should know the things he does not know—and his self-esteem suffers accordingly.

Or: a man is struggling to solve a certain problem, and he is thinking about it to the best of his honest ability. He fails: he cannot solve it—or he cannot solve it in a given period of time. He reproaches himself morally, feeling that he should have been able to do it “somehow,” even though he has no clue as to how—and his self-esteem suffers accordingly.

Or: after thinking about an issue as carefully and conscientiously as he can, a man makes an error of judgment—and harmful consequences follow. The man feels guilty, on the premise that he should have avoided the error “somehow,” even though he does not know what he could have done differently, given his knowledge at the time of the decision—and his self-esteem suffers accordingly.

It would be superficial and false to conclude—as many psychologists today would conclude—that these men's error consists of being “perfectionists.” The error of men who make impossible, unrealistic demands of themselves, is not that of “perfectionism,” but of judging themselves by a mistaken and irrational *standard* of perfection—a standard that is incompatible with man's nature. A rational standard of moral perfection would demand that a man use his mind to the fullest extent of his ability, that he practice an unbreached rationality; it would not demand omniscience, omnipotence or infallibility.

One of the worst wrongs a man can do to himself is to accept an unearned guilt on the premise of a “somehow”—“Somehow I should know,” “Somehow I should be able to do it”—when there is no cognitive content to that “somehow,” only an empty, undefined charge supported by nothing. If a man has no grounds to believe that he was evasive or irresponsible or that he willfully disregarded knowledge which was available to him, he may regret his error or failure, but he should not permit it to become a

moral reproach, a reflection on his basic efficacy or worth.

There is, however, one reason in particular why many men are susceptible to this error. Although a man may be blameless in the present situation, his previous irrationalities and failures to think have led to a general sense of self-distrust, so that he never feels fully certain of his moral status. The solution is to recognize this form of uncertainty for what it is, to identify it as a symptom and strive to be objective and factual in one's self-appraisal. The struggle to achieve a rational policy in dealing with guilt will—*itself*—contribute to the regaining of self-esteem.

(To be continued in our next issue.)

THE ANALYTIC-SYNTHETIC DICHOTOMY

By Leonard Peikoff

Introduction

Some years ago, I was defending capitalism in a discussion with a prominent professor of philosophy. In answer to his charge that capitalism leads to coercive monopolies, I explained that such monopolies are caused by government intervention in the economy and are logically impossible under capitalism. (For a discussion of this issue, see Nathaniel Branden's “Common Fallacies about Capitalism” in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*.) The professor was singularly unmoved by my argument, replying, with a show of surprise and disdain:

“Logically impossible? Of course—granted your definitions. You're merely saying that, no matter what proportion of the market it controls, you won't call a business a ‘coercive monopoly’ if it occurs in a system you call ‘capitalism.’ Your view is true by arbitrary fiat, it's a matter of semantics, it's logically true but not factually true. Leave logic aside now; be serious and consider the actual empirical facts on this matter.”

To the philosophically uninitiated, this response will be baffling. Yet they meet its equivalents everywhere today. The tenets underlying it permeate our intellectual atmosphere like the germs of an epistemological black plague waiting to infect and cut down any idea that claims the support of conclusive logical argumentation, a plague that spreads subjectivism and conceptual devastation in its wake.

This plague is a formal theory in technical philosophy; it is called: *the analytic-synthetic dichotomy*. It is accepted, in some form, by virtually every influential contemporary philosopher—pragmatist, logical positivist, analyst and existentialist alike.

The theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy penetrates every corner of our culture, reaching, directly or indirectly, into every human life, issue

and concern. Its carriers are many, its forms subtly diverse, its basic causes complex and hidden—and its early symptoms prosaic and seemingly benign. But it is deadly.

The comparison to a plague is not, however, fully exact. A plague attacks man's body, not his conceptual faculty. And it is not launched by the profession paid to protect men from it.

Today, each man must be his own intellectual protector. In whatever guise the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy confronts him, he must be able to detect it, to understand it, and to answer it. Only thus can he withstand the onslaught and remain epistemologically untouched.

The theory in question is not a philosophical primary; one's position on it, whether it be agreement or opposition, derives, in substantial part, from one's view of the nature of concepts. The Objectivist theory of concepts is presented in Ayn Rand's *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*. In the present series of articles, I shall build on this foundation. I shall summarize the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy as it would be expounded by its contemporary advocates, and then answer it point by point.

The theory was originated, by implication, in the ancient world, with the views of Pythagoras and Plato, but it achieved real prominence and enduring influence only after its advocacy by such modern philosophers as Hobbes, Leibniz, Hume and Kant. (The theory was given its present name by Kant.) In its dominant contemporary form, the theory states that there is a fundamental cleavage in human knowledge, which divides propositions or truths into two mutually exclusive (and jointly exhaustive) types. These types differ, it is claimed, in their origins, their referents, their cognitive status, and the means by which they are validated. In particular, four central points of difference are alleged to distinguish the two types:

(a) Consider the following pairs of true propositions:

- i) A man is a rational animal.
- ii) A man has only two eyes.
- i) Ice is a solid.
- ii) Ice floats on water.
- i) 2 plus 2 equals 4.
- ii) 2 qts. of water mixed with 2 qts. of ethyl alcohol yield 3.86 qts. of liquid, at 15.56°C.

The first proposition in each of these pairs, it is said, can be validated *merely by an analysis of the meaning of its constituent concepts* (thus, these are called "*analytic*" truths). If one merely specifies the definitions of the relevant concepts in any of these propositions, and then applies the laws of logic, one can see that the truth of the proposition follows directly, and that to deny it would be to endorse a logical contradiction. Hence, these are also called "*logical truths*," meaning that they can be validated merely by correctly applying the laws of logic.

Thus, if one were to declare that "A man is *not* a rational animal," or

that "2 plus 2 does *not* equal 4," one would be maintaining by implication that "A rational animal is *not* a rational animal," or that "1 plus 1 plus 1 plus 1, does *not* equal 1 plus 1 plus 1 plus 1"—both of which are self-contradictory. (The illustration presupposes that "rational animal" is the definition of "man.") A similar type of self-contradiction would occur if one denied that "Ice is a solid."

Analytic truths represent concrete instances of the Law of Identity; as such, they are also frequently called "tautologies" (which, etymologically, means that the proposition repeats "the same thing"; e.g., "A rational animal is a rational animal," "The solid form of water is a solid"). Since all of the propositions of logic and mathematics can ultimately be analyzed and validated in this fashion, these two subjects, it is claimed, fall entirely within the "analytic" or "tautological" half of human knowledge.

Synthetic propositions, on the other hand—illustrated by the *second* proposition in each of the above pairs, and by most of the statements of daily life and of the sciences—are said to be entirely different on all these counts. A "synthetic" proposition is defined as one which *cannot* be validated merely by an analysis of the meanings or definitions of its constituent concepts. For instance, conceptual or definitional analysis alone, it is claimed, could not tell one whether ice floats on water, or what volume of liquid results when various quantities of water and ethyl alcohol are mixed.

In this type of case, said Kant, the predicate of the proposition (e.g., "floats on water") states something about the subject ("ice") which is not already contained in the meaning of the subject-concept. (The proposition represents a *synthesis* of the subject with a new predicate, hence the name.) Such truths cannot be validated merely by correctly applying the laws of logic; they do not represent concrete instances of the Law of Identity. To deny such truths is to maintain a *falsehood*, but *not* a *self-contradiction*. Thus, it is false to assert that "A man has three eyes," or that "Ice sinks in water"—but, it is said, these assertions are not self-contradictory. It is the *facts* of the case, not the laws of logic, which condemn such statements. Accordingly, synthetic truths are held to be "factual," as opposed to "logical" or "tautological" in character.

(b) Analytic truths are *necessary*; no matter what region of space or what period of time one considers, such propositions *must* hold true. Indeed, they are said to be true not only throughout the universe which actually exists, but in "all possible worlds" — to use Leibniz's famous phrase. Since its denial is self-contradictory, the opposite of any analytic truth is unimaginable and inconceivable. A visitor from an alien planet might relate many unexpected marvels, but his claims would be rejected out-of-hand if he announced that, in his world, ice was a gas, man was a postage stamp, and 2 plus 2 equaled 7.3.

Synthetic truths, however, are declared *not* to be necessary; they are called "*contingent*." This means: As a matter of fact, in the actual world

that men now observe, such propositions *happen to be* true—but they do not *have to be* true. They are not true in “all possible worlds.” Since its denial is not self-contradictory, the opposite of any synthetic truth is at least imaginable or conceivable. It is imaginable or conceivable that men should have an extra eye (or a baker’s dozen of such eyes) in the back of their heads, or that ice should sink in water like a stone, etc. These things do not occur in our experience but, it is claimed, there is no logical necessity about this. The facts stated by synthetic truths are “brute” facts, which no amount of logic can make fully intelligible.

Can one conclusively *prove* a synthetic proposition? Can one ever be logically *certain* of its truth? The answer given is: “No. As a matter of logic, no synthetic proposition ‘has to be’ true; the opposite of any is conceivable.” (The most uncompromising advocates of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy continue: “You cannot even be certain of the direct evidence of your senses—for instance, that you now see a patch of red before you. In classifying what you see as ‘red,’ you are implicitly declaring that it is similar in color to certain of your past experiences—and how do you know that you have remembered these latter correctly? That man’s memory is reliable, is not a tautology; the opposite is conceivable.”) Thus, the most one can ever claim for synthetic, contingent truths is some measure of probability; they are more-or-less-likely hypotheses.

(c) Since analytic propositions are “logically” true, they can, it is claimed, be validated *independently of experience*; they are “non-empirical” or “a priori” (today, these terms mean: “independent of experience”). Modern philosophers grant that some experience is required to enable a man to form concepts; their point is that, once the appropriate concepts have been formed (e.g., “ice,” “solid,” “water,” etc.), no *further* experience is required to validate their combination into an analytically true proposition (e.g., “Ice is solid water”). The proposition follows simply from an analysis of definitions.

Synthetic truths, on the other hand, are said to be *dependent upon experience* for their validation; they are “empirical” or “a posteriori.” Since they are “factual,” one can discover their truth initially only by observing the appropriate facts directly or indirectly; and since they are “contingent,” one can find out whether yesterday’s synthetic truths are still holding today, only by scrutinizing the latest empirical data.

(d) Now we reach the climax: the characteristically twentieth-century *explanation* of the foregoing differences. It is: *Analytic propositions provide no information about reality, they do not describe facts, they are “non-ontological”* (i.e., do not pertain to reality). Analytic truths, it is held, are created and sustained by men’s arbitrary decision to use words (or concepts) in a certain fashion, they merely record the implications of linguistic (or conceptual) *conventions*. This, it is claimed, is what accounts for the characteristics of analytic truths. They are non-empirical—because they say nothing about the world of experience. No fact can ever cast doubt upon them, they are immune from future correction—because

they are immune from reality. They are necessary—because men make them so.

“The propositions of logic,” said Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, “all say the same thing: that is, nothing.” “The principles of logic and mathematics,” said A. J. Ayer in *Language, Truth and Logic*, “are true universally simply because we never allow them to be anything else.”

Synthetic propositions, on the other hand, *are* factual—and for this, man pays a price. The price is that they are contingent, uncertain and unprovable.

The theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy presents men with the following choice: If your statement is proved, it says nothing about that which exists; if it is about existents, it cannot be proved. If it is demonstrated by logical argument, it represents a subjective convention; if it asserts a fact, logic cannot establish it. If you validate it by an appeal to the meanings of your *concepts*, then it is cut off from reality; if you validate it by an appeal to your *percepts*, then you cannot be certain of it.

Objectivism rejects the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy as false—in principle, at root, and in every one of its variants.

In the next issue, we shall begin to analyze and answer this theory point by point.

(To be continued in our next issue.)

ANNOUNCING “NEWS IN FOCUS”

The June issue of THE OBJECTIVIST will inaugurate a new monthly column — “News in Focus” — by Jeffrey St. John, radio news commentator, columnist and journalist.

As our readers know, THE OBJECTIVIST is, primarily, a theoretical journal, and it has not been our policy, with rare exceptions, to comment on journalistic news events. However, in view of the bewildering chaos of today’s events on both the domestic and international scene, we believe that a column devoted to such commentary will be of value to our readers.

Mr. St. John’s concern is primarily journalistic; philosophically, he is studying Objectivism.

A former *Stars and Stripes* correspondent in Korea, Mr. St. John served for five years as a correspondent in Washington, covering Congress and the White House; as a journalist, he has traveled to most of the major countries of the world.

His incisive news commentaries are heard Mondays through Fridays in New York City (8:00 P.M., WRFM, 105.1), and in one hundred nations in Europe, Latin America and Africa via Radio New York Worldwide. He writes a column for the *Nation’s Business* and is President of his own communications consulting firm, CINCOM, Inc.

OBJECTIVIST CALENDAR

■ The current N.Y. series of "The Romantic Screen," which was to have ended on June 16, will be extended for three additional weeks. Dates: June 23, June 30 and July 7. Time: 7:30 P.M. Place: Sheraton-Atlantic Hotel, 34th St. and Broadway. Series tickets for these three films may be purchased at the door on June 23; price: \$7.50. Tickets for individual film showings will be available at the door on the night of each showing, space permitting; price: \$3.00 per film. For information, contact NBI.

■ On June 19 and June 30, in Los Angeles and San Francisco respectively, NBI will offer a new series entitled "The Romantic Screen," which will present twelve feature films selected from among the best movies in the general category of the Romantic school. For further information, contact NBI's local Business Representatives: in Los Angeles, Peter Crosby, 726 North Tularosa Drive, (213) NO 3-4889; in San Francisco, Paul Eisen, 2149 Beach Street, (415) WE 1-8326.

■ On July 6, a new NBI course, "The Principles and Practice of Non-Fiction Writing," to be given in person by Edith Efron, will begin in Boston. For further information, contact NBI's local Business Representatives, Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Shields, 60 A Walden St., Cambridge; 491-2119 (eves. and wkends).

■ On July 15 & 16, in Los Angeles and San Francisco respectively, Nathaniel Branden will deliver the opening lecture of his course "The Psychology of Romantic Love." The entire course will be given by Mr. Branden in person, in both cities, during July and early August. For further information, contact NBI's local Business Representatives: in Los Angeles, Peter Crosby; in San Francisco, Paul Eisen (addresses above).

■ On Sunday, July 16, Leonard Peikoff will speak under the auspices of the Callahan-Shulman Lectures, in Birmingham, Michigan. His subject: "Logic: Who Needs It?" Time: 8 P.M. Place: The Metropolitan Federal Savings Building, Southfield at 14 Mile Road. Open to the public. Admission: \$2.00. For information, contact Dr. Roger Callahan at 356-0991.

■ NBI's Tape Transcription Division has scheduled the following starting dates: "Contemporary Philosophy" in Phoenix, June 16; Dallas, June 30—"Objectivism's Theory of Knowledge" in Rockford, Ill., June 27; Youngstown, July 9—"The Psychology of Romantic Love" in Boston, June 28. For further information, contact NBI.

■ Reservations for NBI's twenty-one day Tour of Europe—which leaves from New York City on July 22 and returns on August 11—are still being accepted. NBI students and subscribers to THE OBJECTIVIST who wish further information are invited to write to NBI's San Francisco Business Representative, Paul Eisen (address above).

■ *Correction:* The reading of the three plays by Ayn Rand, announced in last month's OBJECTIVIST, will not be given this season. —B. B.

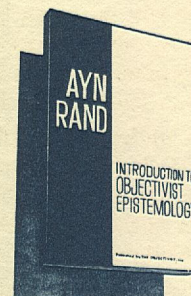
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by AYN RAND

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