

An Objectivist Perspective on Recurrent Problems in the History of Psychology¹

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Abstract

This essay argues that Objectivism, the philosophy of Ayn Rand, can provide unique insights to problems that have plagued psychology since its inception. These problems include: the nature of consciousness, the mind-body relation, the nature of concepts (including that status of psychological concepts), the validity of introspection, the subconscious, the relation of reason and emotion, free will, self-esteem and values. These insights are applied to various practical problems in psychology and issues, including multiculturalism, conflict resolution, racism, criminality, psychotherapy, love and intelligence.

Despite the fact that psychology as an independent science is now over 100 years old, there are certain recurring theoretical-philosophical issues in the field that never seem to get resolved. Among these are: the nature of consciousness (and the subconscious), the consciousness of animals, the relation of mind and body, the validity of introspection, the epistemological status of psychological concepts (often called “constructs”), free will versus determinism, the nature of self-esteem, and the objectivity of values. The failure to resolve these issues has also created problems in the area of application, including: the proper attitude towards other cultures, conflict-resolution, the treatment of criminals, psychotherapy, and the understanding of racism, love and intelligence

Over the past century we have been offered perspectives on virtually all of these issues by behaviorists (Skinner, 1971), Freudians (Freud, 1930), positivists (discussed in Blanshard, 1962), humanists (Rogers, 1964), religionists (Jones, 1994), post-modernists (Gergen, 1994), and romanticists (Schneider, 1998)—but to no avail. Some have concluded that most or all of these problems are intractable (Dougher, 1995; Hayes & Wilson, 1995) or at least require decades more of scientific research. I would disagree on both counts (Locke, 1995, 1996). Most of these issues pertain to the philosophy of psychology and thus precede, that is, form the foundation for, the science of psychology (e.g., the issue of free will cannot be resolved by a laboratory experiment). The problems remain recalcitrant if one approaches them from the viewpoint of the dominant schools of contemporary psychology or philosophy (e.g., post-modernism); however, the dominant schools do not exhaust all contemporary viewpoints.

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I suggest that the philosophy of Objectivism (Peikoff, 1991) can offer unique resolutions to the problems that have resisted resolution in psychology since its inception. (It follows, of course, that these problems have not been resolved within philosophy either). I will begin by giving a very brief overview of the philosophy of Objectivism, and then will present its tenets in more detail as I address each philosophy of psychology issue.

Objectivism

(Space limitations require extreme condensation in what follows.) Objectivism, the philosophy of Ayn Rand (Peikoff, 1991), is a complete system of philosophy that ranks with Plato, Aristotle and Kant in terms of originality and completeness. Objectivism has five hierarchically interconnected branches (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics and esthetics). Its *metaphysics* proceeds from three primary axioms or axiomatic concepts. (An axiomatic concept is a concept that identifies a primary fact of reality and thus cannot be reduced to other facts, that forms the base of all knowledge, and is self-evident to perception. Axioms cannot be denied without self-contradiction; Rand, 1990). Such concepts are defined ostensively and are neither arbitrary nor proven by deduction; rather, they form the base of all proofs.

The primary axioms are: existence (existence exists), identity (to exist is to be something), and consciousness (awareness of existence). The law of causality is a corollary of identity; causality is the law of identity applied to action. An entity's actions are determined by its nature. Objectivism holds that existence has primacy over consciousness; consciousness identifies but does not create the metaphysically given. In relation to the mind-body issue, Objectivism rejects materialism, idealism and dualism—an issue I will address later.

In *epistemology*, Objectivism considers the validity of the senses to be a corollary of the axiom of consciousness. The senses are valid in that they give us knowledge of reality. (Claiming the senses are invalid is a contradiction since such a claim would require sensory knowledge). Through reason man has the power to volitionally integrate the material provided by the senses and thereby form valid (i.e., objective) concepts. Ayn Rand's original theory of concepts and her original theory of free will, will be presented later. Objectivism holds that all knowledge is contextual (relational); this means that all conceptual knowledge must be integrated, including the integration of higher-level concepts with the lower-level ones (i.e., those closer to sense perception) from which they were derived.

Objectivism asserts that reason (based on the material of the senses) is man's only means of knowledge. Consequently, it views reason as man's basic tool of survival. It rejects emotions as a tool of knowledge but has a unique view of the relationship between reason and emotion (to be presented later)

In *ethics*, Objectivism rejects Hume's widely accepted notion that you can't get an ought from an is (also embraced by Kendler, 1993). The key to Ayn Rand's view lies in understanding the root of the concept of value. The basic fact that gives rise to the issue of value is the fact that the existence of living organisms is conditional; they face the fundamental alternative of existence or non-existence, i.e., life or death. The concept of value pre-supposes entities that must engage in goal-directed action to survive. As Rand (1964 b, p. 18) puts it, "It is only the concept of 'Life'

that makes the concept of ‘Value’ possible.” Unlike the lower animals, man has no inborn, automatic code of values to guide his choices and actions. He needs a code of values to guide such choices. Man’s life (meaning the requirements of long-range survival) is the standard of moral values, “that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good; that which negates, opposes or destroys it is the evil” (Rand, 1964 b, p. 25). The primary virtue is rationality (all the virtues pertain to the relationship between existence and consciousness) “the recognition and acceptance of reason as one’s only source of knowledge, one’s only judge of values and one’s only guide to action” (Rand, 1964 b, p. 28). Other virtues implicit in the virtue of rationality include: independence (using one’s own mind and taking responsibility for one’s own life); honesty (the refusal to fake reality); integrity (loyalty to one’s rational convictions in action); justice (rationality in evaluating other men); productiveness (the creation of the material values one’s life requires); and pride (moral ambitiousness).

Objectivism advocates rational egoism, which refers to the fact that man should be the moral beneficiary of his own actions. It rejects hedonism (mindless self-indulgence). It rejects altruism (sacrifice of the self to others) as anti-life and thus would reject Prilleltensky’s (1997, p. 517) claim that “a right moral action is that which enhances the well being of others.” It does not object to non-sacrificial benevolence toward and helping of others. Objectivism regards the initiation of physical force against others as a major vice. It advocates the achievement of happiness as the highest moral purpose of man’s life.

In *politics* Objectivism holds that the proper function of government is the protection of individual rights (the protection of man against the initiation of force by others since force negates man’s means of survival, his mind). The economic application of this principle is capitalism.

The Nature of Consciousness

Objectivism holds that, most fundamentally, consciousness is the faculty of perceiving reality. Rejecting Descartes’ *cogito*, Rand (1961, p. 124) writes: “ If nothing exists, there can be no consciousness: a consciousness with nothing to be conscious of is a contradiction in terms. A consciousness conscious of nothing but itself is a contradiction in terms: before it could identify itself as consciousness, it had to be conscious of something.”

Objectivism also rejects Kant’s view that we can only be aware of the phenomenal world since our consciousness allegedly distorts our perceptions, e.g., because we do not see wavelengths but color. Objectivism distinguishes between the object and form of perception. The sense organs give us awareness of reality in a particular form (e.g., wavelength in the form of color). The fact that consciousness has identity—that is, works by some means—does not invalidate consciousness; in fact, it is only because consciousness has identity that we can perceive reality. Reality cannot be perceived by *no* means.

Mind and Body

Objectivism rejects both materialism (existence without consciousness) and idealism (consciousness without existence), and for the same reason—these two doctrines fly in the face of the primary axioms. Existence exists and consciousness is awareness of existence. Both the materialists and the religionists agree that consciousness is somehow unnatural, even supernatural. Watson rejected it because it was not material (could not be put in a test tube). Skinner rejected it because, he claimed, it was not causal (an epiphenomenon). Freud subordinated it to instinct (the id). The religionists agree that science has no room for consciousness and claim that it belongs to their realm (Lewis, 1947).

Objectivism views consciousness as wholly natural, as a faculty possessed by certain living organisms. It can be observed directly (by introspection—an issue I will address later). It has a specific nature, including specific organs (the senses, the brain). It fulfills specific functions (awareness, evaluation, etc.). It operates according to specific laws.

Although consciousness requires specific, material organs (it is not disembodied), it is not reducible to matter. The reason for this can be observed directly. Matter and consciousness have different attributes, as Blanshard (1964) pointed out over thirty years ago. Objects can be round, green and rough; thoughts cannot. Thoughts can be vague, illogical, and contradictory; matter cannot. “[I]t seems as nonsensical to call a [bodily or brain] movement true as a flavour purple or a sound avaricious” (Blanshard, 1964, p. 339). When one introspects, one does not observe neural motions; when one operates on the brain, one does not see thoughts. Two types of entities cannot be the same if they possess different attributes. This refutes the “double-aspect theory,” the doctrine that ideas and neural events are two aspects of the same underlying reality. The same underlying reality cannot have incommensurable attributes. The distinction between brain and consciousness also holds at the sensory-perceptual level. The very act of claiming, for example, that “sensation X results from stimulation of location Y in the brain” presupposes that the two are different, else there could be no cause and effect relationship between them.

It does not follow that Objectivism is dualistic, at least not in the Cartesian sense of two separate realities, or an inherent mind-body conflict, or the soul’s metaphysical independence from the brain. Mind and body are two aspects of a single, integrated entity. Objectivists might agree with Sperry (1993) that consciousness is an emergent property of a certain level of brain complexity, but this is not really so much a biological discovery (at least not yet) as a metaphorical statement. There is no standard term for the Objectivist position on this issue so Peikoff (1991) simply calls it “Objectivism.”

It must be stressed that philosophy can have little more to say on this matter. Issues such as how brain structure gives rise to consciousness, how the brain affects thought and how thoughts affect the brain are scientific, not philosophical issues. Philosophy can only say that no future discoveries will make it possible to reduce consciousness away or define it out of existence. Consciousness is *sui generis*.

Levels of Awareness

Aristotle distinguished three levels of life, each higher level subsuming the lower levels: the vegetative (plants), the sensory (animals) and the intellectual (man; Randall, 1960). I am concerned here with the distinction between the latter two levels. Animals hold their knowledge in the form of percepts (the direct awareness of objects); men hold their knowledge also in the form of concepts that integrate perceptual material. (I will expand on this point in a later section). Objectivism agrees with (and expands on) Aristotle's distinction, but it seems not to have been understood clearly by many psychologists. The failure to understand this distinction has led to two types of errors.

The first error is the attempt to demonstrate that the lower animals are like man because they allegedly function at the conceptual level. The chimp language experiments are an example. After years of attempting to train chimps to grasp (sign) language, psychologists discovered that chimps do not really understand language in the human sense at all (e.g., see Terrace, 1979). They learn names like "hurt" but then use them in a way that shows they do not understand their abstract meaning (e.g., using the hurt sign to refer to red stains, decals and a person's navel; Bronowski & Bellugi, 1970). They form pseudo- sentences by stringing together signs almost at random, typically in response to prompts by the experimenter or to express their desires (Terrace, 1979).

The claim that animals grasp concepts also ignores the entire context of our knowledge about the lower animals including the important dissimilarities in size and structure between the brains of man and chimp. Despite having been on the earth for millions of years, chimpanzees have never shown the slightest evidence of even a low-grade culture despite the fact that even an understanding of simple concepts would have given them an inestimable competitive advantage in the struggle for survival. Thus, one can only react with incredulity to claims such as that of Mason (1976, p. 293) that, "there is no unequivocal evidence at this point of a grand abyss separating the cognitive processes of ape from man." How about the abyss separating the jungle and New York City?

The other side of this false coin is to deny that animals are conscious at all. Consider a recent article by Blumberg and Wasserman (1995) who suggest that the idea that animals possess consciousness stems from religion (the argument from design) or bad philosophy. Objectivism would argue that *the premise that animals are conscious, at some level, is not rationally debatable*. Animals possess sense organs, a nervous system and a brain and are able to act with respect to the environment and learn from it. Anyone can observe this. The inference of consciousness is fully justified and to reject it would be, again, to reject the entire context of human knowledge concerning the nature of animals and of consciousness.

A careful reading of Blumberg and Wasserman's paper, however, reveals that when they refer to consciousness in animals they are, by implication, referring to a *conceptual* consciousness. The examples that they give are an attack on the idea that animals have the capacity for intelligent, long-range purposeful action, causal thinking and complex problem solving. They correctly show that in these respects animals are, in fact, quite "stupid" in comparison to man. But this merely demonstrates that animals function only at the sensory-perceptual level and not at the

level of concepts. The fact that animals do not function like humans does not render them unconscious. (Skinner did not perform his experiments on sleeping or comatose animals). In sum, the objective evidence indicates that animals are conscious but only at the sensory-perceptual level.

The source of much of this confusion lies in the fact that psychologists have not had a viable theory of the nature of concepts.

Concepts

(Again, what follows is an extreme condensation). Ayn Rand (1990, p. 2) rejects all the historical theories of concepts, e.g., extreme realism (Plato), moderate realism (Aristotle), nominalism, and conceptualism. Concept-formation, she argues, begins with seeing similarities and differences between entities. By a process of abstraction, one mentally isolates those concretes that are similar from those that are different according to some distinguishing characteristic (e.g., shape, color) and treats the similar entities as interchangeable units. But how is this possible, since every entity is, in reality, different from every other? Rand's distinctive discovery here is the concept of measurement-omission (see also Peikoff, 1991). For example, consider the concept of length. Objects such as matches, pencils and sticks are of different lengths; the concept of length specifies that an object possessing this characteristic must be of some length but may be of any length. Some length has to exist in every case but is not specified. The similar attributes are integrated into a mental unit by ignoring the differences in measurement. The same is true for concepts of objects. For example, a table has a flat level surface but mentally the particular shape, the number of legs, the material it is made of, its color, all of which are measurable characteristics, are all omitted measurements even though every table must have some shape, have legs or the equivalent, be made of something and have some color. Thus a concept is defined as, "a mental integration of two or more units possessing the same distinguishing characteristic(s), with their particular measurements omitted" (Rand, 1990, p. 13).

The process of concept formation is completed by denoting the concept by means of a word (thus forming a new mental entity) and providing a definition. The definition ties the concept to its referents in reality. The definition does not exhaust the meaning of the whole concept but only states its essentials for the purpose of keeping the word (concept) both tied to (genus) and differentiated from (differentia) other concepts (e.g., man is the rational animal).

Objectivism holds that concepts and definitions are not arbitrary but are based on reality, that is, on real entities, attributes, actions, relationships, etc. Concepts are the distinctively human method of grasping reality (through differentiation and integration); they enable man to expand the range of his knowledge because an unlimited number of concretes can be held in mind by a single mental unit (e.g., the concept man includes all particular men, including men who are no longer living and men who have not yet been born and all attributes of men including those attributes not yet discovered).

Now we can see what would be required if one wanted to prove that animals could grasp concepts. In essence, one would have to demonstrate that animals can abstract out the differences among similar entities and treat them as units. Concepts pertaining to concrete objects are not

always suitable for this purpose, because animals routinely engage in perceptual generalization. They can readily observe perceptual similarities and differences. Since, for example, most oranges look alike, there would be little difference between perceptual generalization and the formation of a crude or partial concept of orange held as a mental image. It would be a more unequivocal conceptual challenge for the chimp if oranges came in noticeably different colors, sizes and shapes. A proper test must assess the chimp's ability to grasp concepts where perceptual generalization would not be sufficient.

Here would be a conclusive test of a chimp's conceptual ability. Make a large pile of geometric objects differing in size (e.g., large, medium and small), color (e.g., green, red, yellow, blue) and shape (e.g., triangles with different angles, squares, rectangles, pentagons). After providing as much training as desired, *ask the chimp to bring the experimenter ten green triangles*. I chose the number ten because it is well known that both humans and animals can distinguish about seven separate entities, and thus by implication distinguish three from four or five from six entities, by direct perception. Having to pick ten would require them to actually count, which requires them to abstract number from object. Similarly, having them pick green triangles forces them to abstract out the attributes of color and shape (three-sided objects) from the objects and treat them as interchangeable mental units. For a man, this is not a very hard task considering that it involves very low level abstractions (e.g., as compared to, say, abstractions such as "algebra," "justice," or "institution"). I do not know of any chimp experiment that has come close to demonstrating a capacity such as I have described. In fact, I would argue that most chimp experiments reveal mainly the ingenuity (intelligence) of experimenters in *reducing conceptual tasks to the perceptual level* [e.g., through the use of iconic symbols, redefining concepts in superficial ways (e.g., "out" defined only as moving away), giving choices that require only sensory discrimination or matching or association; Locke, 1989]. The evidence indicates that animals have a terrible time even learning to identify colors (divorced from objects) above the chance level (Locke, 1989).

Concepts of Consciousness

It has become almost an axiom of psychology that concepts pertaining to conscious experiences are not really real; rather they are asserted to be "hypothetical constructs" (MacCorquodale & Meehl, 1948). Objectivism holds that, in fact, such concepts are not hypothetical and not arbitrarily constructed, but rather are real and objective—so long as they are formed by the right method and denote actual facts of consciousness. The method is the same as for concepts pertaining to the external world. Consider, for example, the concept of "purpose," a goal held in conscious form (Binswanger, 1990). One forms this concept by observing, through introspection, various instances of having conscious goals (e.g., go to the store, earn some money, get good grades in school, do the chores, get a date with Jane). The similar element, a desire for some end, is abstracted away from the content of the actual purposes (measurement omission) and integrated into a new mental unit. Once the concept is defined, other people also can validate it by performing the same act of abstraction in their own minds.

The process described does not permit the formation of arbitrary concepts. Consider, for example, Freud's "id." There are no mental entities that one could observe by introspection that would validate such a concept, especially considering that the id is asserted to be totally

unconscious. In contrast, wants, desires, and emotions are directly observable and thus fully objective. (This is not to deny the validity of other concepts pertaining to the subconscious—see below.)

Defining the meaning of a concept of consciousness is not the same as measuring the contents of a particular person's mind (e.g., "what is Mr. X really after?"). Discovering how to do this sometimes poses a daunting challenge for psychologists, especially if the individual has an intent to deceive (or to withhold information) or introspects poorly. This last brings up another critical issue: the validity of introspection.

Introspection

The critical observations regarding the concept of introspection are:

- (a) Introspection is distinctive to the conceptual level of awareness; it requires a volitional refocusing of the mind from the external to the internal (existence to consciousness). Animals are programmed to perceive the external world; their survival depends on it. They can only be aware of what their sense organs feed them. They have no power to give themselves the order, "Forget about the outside world; what am I feeling today?"
- (b) Introspection allows one to observe consciousness directly. Contrary even to the view of people who defend the study of consciousness (Earley & Randel, 1995), consciousness can be observed directly just as the external world can be observed directly (Locke, 1996). The only difference is that each person is the only direct observer of his own consciousness. In other people (and animals), consciousness, and its contents, must be inferred.
- (c) The private nature of consciousness does not exclude it from the realm of science. The conventional argument here is that introspection must be excluded from science because it does not meet the criterion of "inter-subjective verifiability", which in essence means: collective opinion or agreement. Objectivism rejects the notion that collective opinion is a criterion of truth. One cannot logically claim that a discovery made by one person is invalid, but, when made by two or two thousand people, it suddenly becomes valid. Validity is not a matter of numbers but of method and of evidence. Just because consciousness cannot be studied by the methods of the physical sciences (e.g., where everyone is able to observe the same object) is no reason to reject it. *In science the methods used must be suitable to the subject matter.* We do not use spectrosopes to study economics or telescopes to study biology. It is totally arbitrary to claim that because we can't study consciousness using the method we prefer, we will exclude it from the science of psychology. Introspection is the key (though not the only) method of psychology; all psychological concepts are formed through introspection. (All distinctively psychological concepts are concepts of consciousness.) Psychological concepts discovered by the introspection of one person can be replicated by others in their own minds. People do this every day; this is why they are able to communicate intelligibly about what they believe, remember, feel, plan, and aspire to.

(d) Introspection is neither omniscient nor infallible. The fact that introspection may be mistaken in a given case, however, does not invalidate it. After all, a person may be mistaken when performing addition or subtraction, but this does not invalidate arithmetic. In fact, it would be a contradiction to claim that introspection must be rejected because error is possible. *The detection of error—in introspection or in any other sphere-- presupposes that one can distinguish it from the truth*; otherwise no claim of error could be made. As noted above, validation in the formation of concepts of consciousness is done individually by each person who can then communicate with others. Practical problems of validation are most likely to arise when a given person is reporting, not a new concept, but the contents of his particular beliefs, memories, emotions, or intentions. In some cases the validation problems are daunting (e.g., childhood memories of sexual abuse; Loftus, 1993). However, this is primarily a scientific rather than a specifically philosophical issue. Actually considerable progress has already been made in determining when introspective reports can and cannot be relied on (e.g., see Crutcher, 1994; Davison, Navarre & Vogel, 1995; Ericsson & Simon, 1980).

The Subconscious

The concept of the subconscious has gotten a bad reputation in psychology because of its association with Freud's concept of the "unconscious." There is a clear contradiction in claiming that there are ideas in the mind of which we can never become conscious, that is, which we cannot in principle discover through introspection. How else could one know they were there? Freud's answer was: through dreams, but his method of interpreting dreams was basically question-begging. The interpretations make sense only if one has already accepted his theory.

The subconscious, however, is a fully objective concept (not a hypothetical construct). It is formed by observing that *there are ideas in your mind which you are not now aware of but which you can become aware of without further learning* (i.e., without focusing further on the outside world). For example, if someone asks you about "mother" or "giraffe" or "school," relevant associations are automatically brought into focal awareness. The same occurs if one sets a purpose for oneself (e.g., "what do I know about American history?"). The need for such a concept as the subconscious is undeniable; if man can hold only seven or so disparate objects in conscious awareness at a given time, it follows that 99.9999% of all his knowledge must be stored in the subconscious. One could not even carry on a conversation without having automatized the meanings of words and the rules of grammar and syntax in the subconscious. Such subconscious automatization is critical, because it leaves the conscious mind free to focus on the acquisition of new knowledge.

The greatest ongoing controversy in relation to the subconscious has involved the idea of repression—a Freudian legacy, but one with an objective basis. Repression, in essence, involves giving one's subconscious the standing order: "keep this painful material out of focal awareness." How could one validate such a concept? In principle it would have to work something like this: one would have to be a very observant introspector and notice that when a certain idea or emotion enters the periphery of awareness, one became uncomfortable (e.g., anxious, guilty) and mentally pushed it out (suppressed it). Then gradually, one would notice that after doing this enough times, it became a habit and that no conscious decision was subsequently

required to keep the unpleasant thoughts from arising. One could also notice that if one later gave oneself the conscious order to focus on a certain type of painful thought, it would gradually come back into awareness. This is not to deny that some subconscious memories, especially those stored early in life, might be extremely hard to uncover. (The concept of repression might also be discovered through inference, e.g., through careful questioning of a patient.)

The conscious and the subconscious fundamentally are not isolated regions or parts of the mind; there is a continual interchange between them during every waking moment of one's life. Objectivism, therefore, would disagree with Epstein (1994) who claims that people have two separate minds (a mind-mind dichotomy!). He argues that we possess a rational system that works by logic and a separate experiential system that operates by intuition, emotion, passion, images and religious feeling. He argues that the second system often affects the first without our knowledge. Basically, Epstein has described the conscious and the subconscious mind, but he has failed to indicate their actual relationship, especially the continual interplay (noted above) and the essential causal relationship between them.

The conscious mind is active (if one chooses to use it); it perceives reality, forms concepts, evaluates truth and falsity, integrates, sets goals, solves problems, makes choices, and it programs the subconscious, i.e., feeds it facts, integrations and conclusions. Although the subconscious does perform a certain amount of integration on its own (demonstrated by the fact that sometimes we can be puzzled by some issue after a period of thinking and then come back to it to find the solution partially clear without any additional thought), it is basically passive. It does what it is told. The computer metaphor GIGO (garbage in, garbage out) is quite apt here. If one feeds one's subconscious half-digested concepts, that's what will come out later. (For proof, talk to any college student after an exam on which he did not perform well; Locke, 1998). Similarly, if one feeds contradictions into the subconscious or fails to integrate new conscious material with old, subconscious material, then the subconscious, in turn, will feed the conscious mind contradictory messages. A classic example of this is the so-called conflict between reason and emotion.

Reason and Emotion

The alleged conflict between reason and emotion is a version of the mind-body dichotomy which has its roots in the philosophy of Plato (the rational soul versus the baser, irrational soul) and accepted in various forms by many major thinkers since including Augustine, Hobbes, Descartes, Freud. (Skinner's body-bodies dichotomy and Epstein's mind-mind dichotomy are variants on this theme).

Ayn Rand rejects the mind-body dichotomy in all of its variants, including reason vs. emotion (Peikoff, 1991). Her view of emotions (first noted in 1957) is most consistent with (but not identical to) the "appraisal" view of emotions offered later by Arnold (1960) and Lazarus (1991). The common element is the view that emotions stem from automatized subconscious appraisals. Objectivism argues that emotions are the form in which one experiences subconscious value-judgments. The sequence goes: object—cognitive appraisal—value appraisal—emotion. Let us consider the sequence in more detail.

(a) Object. Anything can be the object of an emotion, including an object, a person, a thought or another emotion. In some cases the object may not be readily apparent but is usually oneself in such cases as generalized anxiety.

(b) Cognitive appraisal. Emotions are based on stored (subconscious) perceptual and conceptual knowledge. If one meets a bear in the woods, one's reaction will depend on one's knowledge of bears and also one's perceived relationship to the bear (how far away it is, the existence of shelter, weapons, etc.).

(c) Value-appraisal. One evaluates the information one has about the object by the standard of one's values, e.g., in the case of the bear, the value is one's life and safety. Every emotion is based on a unique type of implicit value-appraisal (see also Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). Grief stems from value-loss, guilt from violating a moral principle, satisfaction from value-achievement, anger from observing an unjust or improper action by oneself or another, anxiety from threat to one's values or self-esteem, etc.

(d) Emotion. The emotion is a conscious experience involving both psychological and bodily aspects. The form in which one consciously experiences an emotion is not the four-part causal sequences shown above; in the bear example the conscious experience would be: bear—fear. The cognitive and value appraisals are automatic and subconscious. How then does one validate this model?

First, from introspection done retrospectively. In the bear example, one can ask oneself: why was I afraid of the bear? Answer: because I saw that he was very big and was snarling and only 25 feet away and I did not have a gun and had nowhere to hide—and I had read about attacks by bears in this park before (cognitive appraisal). Question: So the bear is big and might attack me, so what? Answer: I thought he would hurt me maybe kill me and I wanted to live (value appraisal).

Second, one can perform mental experiments. Imagine that the bear had been on the other side of a 20-foot deep, 20-foot wide ditch and you knew it could only jump 10 feet. This would lead to a different cognitive appraisal and therefore a different value appraisal and therefore a different emotion, e.g., curiosity. Or imagine that you were dying from a painful, incurable illness, found living to be unbearable and were unequivocally intent on suicide; the emotional response to the bear would be one of indifference.

Third, one can perform mini-experiments on others. Here is one that I used to perform when I taught introductory psychology. I would start discussing the relation between reason and emotion and then suddenly stop the class and say, "Oh, I forgot, we are having an unannounced exam today." I would wait for the uproar to die down and then ask the students what they were feeling and why they were upset. Typically, they felt anger because it was not fair, and fear because they were not prepared and the exam and thought it would hurt their grade. When I told the students I was only kidding, the negative emotions disappeared.

Fourth, there is experimental evidence (Bandura, 1997; Locke, 1969). Bandura has shown, for example, that anxiety and self-efficacy are reciprocally related, since higher self-efficacy means

greater confidence in being able to cope with potential threats. If self-efficacy is increased, anxiety is reduced because the cognitive appraisal is more benign. In addition, Beck's method of changing dysfunctional thinking patterns to alleviate depression has considerable experimental support (Beck, Rush., Shaw, & Emery, 1979).

Given the above, what then are we to make of conflicts between reason and emotion?

Objectivism holds that these are actually conflicts between ideas or values, specifically conflicts between the conscious and the subconscious. Consider this example:

Joe loves Sandra. Sandra is beautiful, intelligent, sensuous, scheming and dishonest. Joe is fully aware of her character but courts her anyway, even after he finds out she is cheating on him. Joe moans, "I know I should stop seeing her but I just can't help loving her. After all, they say love is blind and is impervious to reason."

Consciously Joe knows Sandra is wrong for him and a person without character but what is happening subconsciously? His subconscious is making a different appraisal than his conscious mind; that means it is stressing different facts and values, values which may be very important to him but which he has not consciously identified. His subconscious is undoubtedly stressing Sandra's beauty and sensuous qualities and he may also value being seen by his friends with a beautiful girl. Note that his conscious mind has not integrated his conscious value standards with what he holds dear in the subconscious, nor is he holding in mind her total character and its implications (e.g., what is the implication for you of a person being both intelligent and dishonest?). Because his conscious mind has not done its job, his subconscious responds to only selected parts of Sandra's personality. The alleged conflict between reason and emotion is really a clash between two contradictory sets of ideas, one conscious and one subconscious.

Three apparent counter-examples to the Objectivist theory must be considered. The first is panic attacks and phobias. Even if you rationally convince a person who fears flying that airplanes are statistically very safe, the fear does not go away. However, the typical reason for this is that airplanes are not the real source of the fear. The actual idea behind such fears is typically the anticipation of losing psychological self-control in the airplane (including being unable to stop the constant recycling of negative thoughts). This is why talking about airplane safety does not help. Successful treatment would have to involve teaching phobic people to control their negative thoughts when confronted by situations which trigger them (Bandura, 1997). This example, therefore, is actually consistent with the theory.

Second, consider pathological anxiety of the free-floating variety; there seems to be no object. I would argue that the real object here is oneself, or more precisely, one's (lack of) self-esteem or a repressed conflict that makes one unable to function.

The third example pertains to emotional states that might occur due to brain disorders rather than dysfunctional thinking (e.g., certain types of depression). I would have no argument with this. Chemical imbalances and circuit disturbances can undermine any cognitive function.

None of this should be taken to denigrate the importance of emotions in human life. Emotions are the form in which people experience the reality of their values and without such experiences they would not be motivated at all and could not be happy. What is critical is to understand the

root of emotions and to grasp their proper function; they are tools of motivation, not tools of cognition. They reflect one's automatized premises (ideas and values) but they do not tell one if these premises are correct.

Since emotions are the results of automatic, subconscious processes, it means they are not directly volitional. Volition is an attribute of the conscious mind. We need, therefore, to address the issue of the nature and validation of free will.

Free will vs. determinism

No issue in psychology has seemed more recalcitrant than the freedom-determinism issue. Some argued even before William James that nothing new could be said on the matter but James disagreed: "I know of no subject less worn out, on which inventive genius has a better chance of breaking open new ground" (James, 1956, p. 145). The behaviorists have been consistent in asserting that free will is an illusion; they consider this view to be the only one compatible with objective science (Immergluck, 1964). They are opposed by the humanists (e.g., Rogers, 1964) who acknowledge they cannot prove free will but assert that it is true because they feel it. The religionists assert that the behaviorist view is evidence of the limitations of science (Lewis, 1947) and claim that free will comes from God.

Objectivism holds that free will is real, fully consistent with science and causality, and independent of religion (Binswanger, 1991; Peikoff, 1991). The status of free will is that of an axiom, an axiom implicit in the axiom of consciousness (more exactly, of a conceptual consciousness). This means that free will is self-evident--by directly observing one's own consciousness through introspection, forms the base of all knowledge (all conceptual knowledge), and cannot be rejected without self-contradiction.

Let us consider the last point first. The determinist argues that everything one says, does, thinks, believes or feels is caused by factors outside one's control; therefore whatever anyone asserts to be true, one is compelled to believe and assert due to his genes or conditioning. But if the determinist is, by his own theory, nothing but a robot or a parrot, on what grounds can he assert that his theory or any other theory is true, that is, in accordance with the evidence and consistent with logic? As a victim of determinism, he is not free to decide what evidence to look at, what it means, or what conclusions to draw from it. All he can assert is, "I was compelled to emit these word sounds" and he cannot even claim that as an objectively true statement. This makes all claims of knowledge meaningless including the claim of determinism. This fatal contradiction (in logic it is called the fallacy of self-exclusion) has been pointed out by many writers (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Binswanger, 1991; Boyle, Grisez & Tollefsen, 1972; Jordan, 1972; Locke, 1966).

Epiphenomenalism, the doctrine that mental events are an incidental by-product of brain activity and have no causal efficacy, is a correlate of determinism and is equally self-contradictory (Locke, 1966). The epiphenomenalist is claiming, in effect, "The fact that I believe epiphenomenalism to be true has nothing to do with the fact that I am now advocating it." If this is the case, then he must have been conditioned both to believe and to emit epiphenomenalist words sounds by outside forces—again reducing his claim to nonsense. To claim that

consciousness exists but does not affect anything is to deny the adaptive value of consciousness, e.g., the fact that need-fulfilling action produces pleasure and need frustration brings pain and that these feelings motivate action.

Far from being pro-science, determinism and its correlates are totally anti-science in that they would make all science and all knowledge impossible.

Knowing that determinism is false, however, is not the same as identifying what it consists of. We must dismiss the idea that free will means indeterminism or a-causality. As noted earlier, the law of causality is a corollary of the axiom of identity; thus there can be no causeless action in the universe (including the actions of elementary particles, Heisenberg notwithstanding; see Peikoff, 1991, pp.16-17). What a thing can do and does do in a particular situation depends on its nature (its attributes and characteristics). Acorns cannot grow into Cadillacs and men cannot flap their arms and fly to Mars. Furthermore, if action were uncaused, it would be just as much out of man's control as if he were determined.

Free will entails not uncaused but self-caused action. But what type of action? Typically free will has been asserted to consist of control over desires or control over actions.

We have seen that control over desires must be false because emotions are automatic, based on subconscious appraisals. Thus control over emotions would have to be indirect, through control over their causes (i.e., ideas). This is not to imply that changing emotions is necessarily easy; a given emotion may be connected to many different subconscious ideas that are deeply and strongly held and also repressed.

Freedom of action is closer to the mark but not quite right. It seems that we can raise our arm in the air on demand, and we can, but only because we have judged such an action to be in some way beneficial or not harmful. We are not free to take action divorced from the ideas that motivate it. For example, if one is a moral person who loves his spouse, he could not choose to harm her (mental illness aside) without first convincing himself that she is in some way evil or that harming her would be beneficial (e.g., because he could collect the life insurance which he values more than her). Similarly, one could not suddenly choose to jump off a tall building without first convincing oneself (or having concluded subconsciously) that life was not worth living.

The primary source of free will for Objectivism is tied inextricably to the rational faculty; in fact, it is the rational faculty (not a separate faculty which previous philosophers have called "the will"). The fundamental differences between the perceptual and conceptual levels of cognition are that: (a) perceptual knowledge is an automatic response of the sense organs and nervous system to stimuli; such organs have no power to make judgments or to distort them; thus sense perception cannot be wrong (for a discussion of so-called illusions, see Peikoff, 1991, ch. 2). In contrast, conceptual knowledge is not automatically correct and thus has to be validated; and (b) sense perception is automatic whereas thinking has to be done by choice. Thus Ayn Rand (1961, p. 120) argues that free will consists of the choice to think or not to think:

To think is an act of choice....Reason does not work automatically; thinking is not a mechanical process; the connections of logic are not made by instinct. The function of your stomach, lungs or heart is automatic; the function of your mind is not. In any hour and issue of your life, you are free to think or to evade the effort.

Rand uses the term “focus,” drawing on an analogy from optics. There are degrees of mental focus ranging from an active mind intent on knowing, understanding and integrating, at one extreme, to a mind functioning no higher than the sensory-perceptual level of the lower animals at the other. Between these extremes are varying degrees of focus. Compare, for example the student who, when reading a textbook sees only marks on the page, vs. the student who identifies some facts but does not struggle to understand any concepts, vs. the student who grasps some concepts but does not tie his knowledge together, vs. the fully focused student who actively understands, integrates and judges what he reads. Free will consists of the choice to raise and/or maintain one’s level of mental focus. (This assumes a normal brain state.)

For Objectivism, to be “in focus” does not involve simply paying attention; it means the commitment to being in cognitive contact with reality, it means being intent on thinking logically, it means distinguishing feeling from thinking, it means holding context, and it means monitoring one’s own mental processes (Binswanger, 1991).

The primary act of focus is like turning on a switch; it sets the rational faculty in motion. This choice precedes the formulation or evaluation of any particular ideas, because it is a pre-condition of acquiring ideas in the first place. Nor is it caused by a motive or value, because it is a pre-condition of acquiring values and motives. Nor is it done for a reason because it is a pre-condition of having reasons. The choice to focus, however, is not uncaused. It is caused by the individual. It is a primary choice, made possible by the possession of the rational faculty but not necessitated by any prior condition. Once having chosen to focus, that is, to think, one can observe its benefits but positive outcomes do not "condition" one to keep thinking in the future. One has to focus before grasping the benefits of focus.

Having chosen to switch on his rational faculty at a given time does not guarantee that a man will remain in focus. The choice to think or not to think is made continually. Once in focus there are many subsequent choices that could be made, e.g., to keep thinking about a problem or to stop at a certain point, to identify the cause of an emotion or to let it pass, to correct errors in his thinking or not to bother, to act in accordance with one's professed values or to drift with the temptations of the moment, to integrate new knowledge with his existing ideas or to file ideas that contradict other things he knows, to acquire new knowledge or to drift along on what one already knows, to introspect and monitor one’s own mental processes or not to bother.

Freedom of action is indirect. Most fundamentally it involves keeping in focal awareness, at the time of action, one’s convictions and values and their application to the current situation. This answers a dilemma posed by the ancient Greeks: how can a man act against his knowledge of the good? He can do it by not holding that knowledge in mind (and, as a corollary, banishing contradictory thoughts) when he acts, i.e., by going out of focus (Binswanger, 1991).

The form of causality involved here, self-causation, is unique to man, that is, to a conceptual consciousness (Peikoff, 1991). This type of causality is still a relation between his nature

(identity) and his actions but the choice to focus is a causal primary given a normal brain state. Observe that *only* this type of choice is compatible with man's capacity to know. If he were not free to focus on the evidence, to integrate his observations, to check his method of thinking, to eliminate contradictions, then he could never know anything.

The positive validation of the axiom of free will is direct observation of one's consciousness through introspection. One can observe directly that the use of reason is volitional. The humanists were right in their basic premise that our experience of free will is valid, but they lacked a full philosophical defense for it, especially its axiomatic status and a proper identification of what it involved.

Consciousness as Causal

Implicit in the idea of free will is the conclusion that consciousness is causal, that is, has causal efficacy. If people can choose to think, then thought must affect brain activity. On the face of it, this seems impossible. How could an idea affect a material body? After all, there is no evidence that thought can have direct effects on the external world (e.g., bend spoons, levitate tables). But the conclusion that thought can affect brain activity seems inescapable. The thought that, "I want to raise my arm in the air" must actually start the physical sequence of events leading to my arm going up. That thought, of course, requires brain activity, but we have seen that consciousness is not reducible to such activity. To deny the causal efficacy of consciousness is to embrace epiphenomenalism, which, as we have seen, cannot be true. None of this is an invitation to mysticism. Consciousness is neither ethereal nor omnipotent; it must operate by some means. How it actually works (e.g., how an idea affects the actions of the brain) is up to science to discover.

Understanding volition is the key to understanding self-esteem.

Self-Esteem

Objectivism would agree with most clinicians that self-esteem is a critical psychological need. A person cannot tolerate the conviction that he is (and always will be) fundamentally no good or unefficacious. To quote Ayn Rand (1961, p. 176),

No man can survive the moment of pronouncing himself irredeemably evil; should he do it, his next moment is insanity or suicide. To escape it—if he's chosen an irrational standard—he will fake, evade, blank out; he will cheat himself of reality, of existence, of happiness, of mind; and he will ultimately cheat himself of self-esteem by struggling to preserve its illusion rather than to risk discovering its lack.

What has not been decided in psychology, however, is: what is the fundamental basis for genuine self-esteem? (See Locke, McClear & Knight, 1996, for a discussion of various theories of self-esteem). The most popular view holds that self-esteem is based on parental love and approval. This view has a certain plausibility at least for young children. If parents are cold and abusive, the child may conclude, long before he has the ability to judge the appropriateness of their actions in conceptual terms, that he is no good or incompetent. Such conclusions may be filed in the subconscious before the child has the ability to judge his own worth for himself. False conclusions about the self, if not corrected, may (dis)color all one's subsequent emotional

responses and evaluations (Judge, Locke & Durham, 1997). On the other hand, loving parents provide an antidote to such unearned self-doubt.

Love, however, cannot be the whole story. The child has to grow up and learn to deal with the real world. He is faced with the responsibility of directing the course of his own life and achieving his own happiness. This requires: gaining knowledge and skill, choosing values, earning a living, making friends, finding a romantic partner, (perhaps) raising children, making financial plans, maintaining mental and physical health, solving problems, making (thousands of) decisions, overcoming setbacks, and planning long range.

Feeling loved by itself will not enable the individual to perform these tasks. He has to use his basic tool of knowledge and of survival, his rational mind. Ayn Rand's (1993, p. 181) view is that, "Self-esteem is reliance on one's power to think." This is not a matter of intelligence but of method; it is an issue of consistently using one's cognitive faculty to deal with life's exigencies. Rand (1961, p. 176) argues that, "Every form of causeless self-doubt, every feeling of inferiority and secret unworthiness is, in fact, man's hidden dread of his inability to deal with existence." One deals with existence by thinking.

Reliance on one's power to think entails: (a) the exertion of mental effort, the effort to understand; (b) distinguishing between reason and emotion (emotions are critical for motivation but are not tools of knowledge); (c) to use one's independent judgment (listening to reason but not conforming out of fear); and (d) acting on one's convictions.

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) is clearly relevant here, but self-efficacy refers to task-specific confidence. I would argue that the relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy is reciprocal. By consistently being in focus in one's daily activities, one is more likely to acquire the practical knowledge and skills that survival requires, and acquiring such skills reinforces the conviction that one is fundamentally worthy and able to live.

Self-esteem also requires that one accept and live by a rational moral code; trying to live up to an irrational code (e.g., love your parents no matter how they treated you, never make an error, do everything you are told, make sure everyone likes you) dooms one to chronic moral self-condemnation.

Values

The "pure" scientist insists that science is or should be value free (Kendler, 1993). The post-modernist insists that values are lurking everywhere (especially the desire for power) but are subjective. The religionist insists that values are absolute because they are intrinsic, that is, good in themselves divorced from any human context, and are verified through revelation. Objectivism holds that values are critical to science and every other field, are objective, and are identified through reason. To quote Rand (1967, p. 22):

The objective theory holds that the good is neither an attribute of “things in themselves” [intrinsic] nor of man’s emotional states [subjective], but an evaluation of the facts of reality by man’s consciousness according to a rational standard of value [man’s life]. (Rational, in this context, means: derived from the facts of reality and validated by a process of reason.) The objective theory holds that *the good is an aspect of reality in relation to man*—and that it must be discovered, not invented by man.

Objectivism denies Kant’s intrinsicist view (duty morality) and also hedonism (doing whatever you feel) and for the same reason; both divorce morality from reason and the requirements of human life. The purpose of virtue for Objectivism is to enable man to live successfully and happily on earth (Peikoff, 1991). The key Objectivist virtues noted earlier (reason, honesty, integrity, independence, productiveness, justice, pride) are virtues because they are pro-life, because they help man to live.

Applications

Multiculturalism

Nowhere today does the issue of the nature of values come into sharper focus than with respect to multiculturalism. Fowers and Richardson’s (1996) soul-wrenching article is a case in point. Here is the problem as they identified it: (a) as advocates of enlightenment thought, they stand for the principle of inalienable rights, the idea that all individuals are of value and should be free from coercion by others; (b) as advocates of multiculturalism, they hold that all cultures are morally equal; (c) some cultural groups advocate and practice murder, torture and mutilation of their own people or people from other cultures. Thus objectivism (their term) clashes with relativism (i.e., subjectivism). What is to be done?

Fowers and Richardson’s (1996) solution to this dilemma is “hermeneutics” which they claim transcends the conflict but which is actually a collapse into Hegelian obfuscation, a “fusion of horizons” through dialogue. One example will suffice to show the futility of hermeneutics: Culture A wants to kill everyone in Culture B. What type of dialogue, what type of discussion of historical traditions, what type of synthesis is going to save the people in Culture B?

The philosophy of Objectivism has a simple resolution to Fowers and Richardson’s dilemma. When there is a contradiction between two ideas, at least one of the views has to be wrong. Objectivism would reject the multicultural premise in the name of reason. Objectivism regards the principle of individual rights to be objectively valid—based not on the principle of “God-given rights” but on the principle of man’s nature as a rational being (Peikoff, 1991). Individual rights are an application of reason and egoism (the doctrine that each individual is a value, that is an end in himself) to society. This concept protects man’s life by limiting what other people can do to him (prohibiting the use of physical force), thus leaving him free to act on his own judgment in order to achieve his own happiness.

Thus when a given culture or sub-culture—whether they be Nazis, Communists, Serbians, Rwandans, Ku Klux Klansman, or radical Muslims—advocates and acts to achieve the enslavement, persecution or killing of any individual group, they are violating rights and should be condemned as immoral. They should not be considered equal to cultures that advocate the

protection of individuals and freedom. The objective standard is: the degree to which the culture is pro-life or anti-life.

If we as Americans, knowing first-hand that our nation could not have been formed without the principle of individual rights, cannot stand up for this principle—as an absolute—then we are doomed as a nation, morally and practically. And as the world leader in concern for individual rights, if our ship sinks the world sinks with us. Multi-culturalism is a recipe for tolerance—the tolerance of evil.

Two context factors must be addressed here: (a) There may be some cultures that are so limited in their knowledge of history and philosophy that they literally do not know any better than to kill or be killed. Obviously such cultures need to be educated. The issue is not Western imperialism but objectivity; they need to learn the principles by which civilized societies operate or suffer the consequences (e.g., retaliation or isolation); (b) A distinction must be made between fundamental moral principles (e.g., individual rights) and customs (e.g., forms of greeting, choice of holidays, clothing styles); if customs do not violate rights or are not irrational, they are optional and do not call for moral indictments.

Conflict Resolution

Closely related to the multiculturalism issue, is that of conflict. Psychologists like to believe that conflict is due primarily to miscommunication; they would prefer to believe this than to believe that it is due to real, profound and even irreconcilable value- differences. For example, during the cold war Plous and Zimbardo (1984) attempted to show that there were no important differences between the U.S. and Russia by conducting a reader survey asking people to identify which country did what in foreign policy. A sample item: which country did this: “After 25 years of negotiation, Superpower A withdrew from further talks on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty?” Such a question, of course, is of no significance unless one knows the full context surrounding such a decision. Plous and Zimbardo were very careful to avoid including such important items in their survey as, “This country keeps all of eastern Europe in subjugation by armed force.” They found that the readers failed to pick the right answers to their questions any better than chance and so concluded that the foreign policies of the two countries were indistinguishable. They acknowledged that, “there are major differences between how the United States and the Soviet Union conduct their domestic affairs,” (Plous & Zimbardo, 1984, p. 59) but were careful not to identify what these differences were or what they represented (e.g., totalitarian dictatorship vs. freedom). A year later Morawski and Goldstein (1985, p. 281) claimed that “the arms race was a psychological problem” and that it was irrational to think in black and white (good guy/bad guy) terms.

It is true that some conflicts can be exacerbated by poor communication and psychological problems (e.g., domestic disputes, union-management strife), but it does not follow that all conflicts can be psychologized away—unless one takes the view that all values are subjective and therefore one is as good as another. The Nazis and Communists really did commit mass murder; unless one is indifferent to the value of human life, one cannot say that nothing real was at stake here.

Objectivism holds that, when moral values are at stake, compromising with evil benefits only the evil (Peikoff, 1991). Who would benefit if the Allies before World War II had said, “Well, you want to kill six million Jews, and we would prefer that you not kill any, so how about compromising on 3 million?” On issues of this type, psychologists should avoid the hubris of thinking they have something to contribute qua psychologists.

Racism

Objectivism regards racism to be a fundamental abandonment of the conceptual faculty. “...racism invalidates the specific attribute which distinguishes man from all other living species: his rational faculty....[It] means, in practice, that a man is to be judged, not by his own character and actions, but by the characters and actions of a collective of ancestors” (Rand, 1964 c, p. 147). Racism replaces conceptual judgment, judging people according to their character, with perceptual judgment, judging by skin color. Objectivism would disagree with the modern view that the best way to eliminate racism is to emphasize race; it would advocate treating people only as individuals, not as interchangeable members of a collective. Of course, one cannot literally be colorblind since color is directly perceived; but one can make it unimportant. Of course, many will argue that most people are simply unable or unwilling to do the mental work that judging people according to “the content of their character” requires. On this issue, Objectivism has a higher opinion of man’s potential.

Criminality

It is common for psychologists to want to attribute criminal activity to psychological problems. British physician Theodore Dalrymple’s (1998, p. A-18) experience is probably not unusual:

... a poorly educated burglar asked me for help to overcome the effects of sexual abuse he had suffered in his youth. I asked him what the effects had been.

“Well, doctor, I keep on burgling,” he said.

I suggested to him that the reason he burgled was that he wanted to possess something for which he was either unable or unwilling to pay. I could tell from the expression on his face that this struck him as a novel and preposterous theory, which he had never heard expounded before....no social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist or probation officer—had dared suggest it to him before, no doubt from fear of appearing callous or uncaring.

Most people have one or more psychological problems; however, most do not become criminals. One does not explain an action simply by establishing that one has a desire to act in a certain way. Similarly, Objectivism does not accept the argument that violence is a result of frustration (Staub, 1996). The faculty of reason allows us to decide whether or not it is proper to act on our feelings. Samenow’s (1984) pioneering studies, based on thousands of hours of interviewing actual criminals, attribute criminal behavior to criminal thinking. A key element of criminal thinking is defining morality (the good) as “whatever I want to do.” Curing criminality, according to Samenow, requires retraining the criminal’s thinking processes including the teaching of moral principles. With this, Objectivism would agree wholeheartedly. (Objectivism is not here advocating eliminating punishment for crime).

Psychotherapy

The Nobel-prize equivalent in psychology will go to the person who discovers how to help the patient fundamentally reprogram his subconscious in a way that will remove painful memories and erase self-destructive conclusions the person has filed about himself and the world and replace them with healthier thoughts and conclusions. Current techniques are not hopeless (therapy does help; Seligman, 1995), but they tend to be slow and of limited effectiveness. Further advances await new scientific discoveries.

In the meantime what, according to Objectivism, could therapists teach their clients which would be of value of them? Here are three ideas:

- (a) Emotions are not psychological primaries; they have causes which can be identified (i.e., subconscious ideas); this enables emotional responses to be changed, although the process may be painstaking. (There is no claim that this would cure psychosis, since in such states there is a genuine loss of volition);
- (b) The same cognitive processes that enable one to live successfully, the relentless use of one's mind, will enhance self-esteem. Thus raising self-esteem does not have to be and should not be a separate process from teaching a person how to think and to act on their thinking. Nothing is more futile and self-destructive than the attempt by modern educators, through the elimination of all standards and the showering of praise for meaningless actions, to divorce self-esteem from the ability to do anything (e.g., read and write). Such a policy simply makes our children unfit to live and their so-called self-esteem illusory. Genuine self-esteem can only come from mental effort and genuine self-efficacy comes fundamentally from actual mastery. What holds in education also holds in therapy. Loving the patient may temporarily reduce their anxiety, but it is not a cure.
- (c) Therapy cannot be divorced from values, not unless the therapist is totally passive (e.g., "Uhhh, I see that you value X"). Consider a patient who comes to a therapist and says, "I am very much in love with a man who is not my husband and am considering asking for a divorce, but my husband claims it is my duty to honor my religious marriage vows and stay with him for life. I want to leave but I feel so guilty. I don't know what to do." (This is not a made-up case).

Observe that this is a moral conflict. It involves such questions as: Does a person have the right to their own happiness or not? Is there a duty to serve others? Must a marriage vow taken at time X be honored at time Y even though circumstances have changed? Is the guilt earned or unearned? None of these questions can be answered in the absence of a moral code. If the therapist claims that all moral codes are subjective, he will be unable to help the client. (Moral conflicts do not always dissolve away when discussed in more depth.)

Obviously a therapist should not bully a client into blindly accepting the therapist's moral code; nor should the therapist make practical decisions for the client, but just being a good listener is not enough. The client wants answers or at least a means of getting answers and these answers

involve moral issues. Psychology cannot escape the fact that morality is an objective human need.

Love

Objectivism considers romantic love to be a crucially important value. However, it differs with the religious view and the humanist view in that it regards love to be selfish rather than selfless. “A ‘selfless,’ ‘disinterested’ love is a contradiction in terms; it means that one is indifferent to that which one values,” (Rand, 1964 a, p.51). Further Objectivism holds that a firm sense of self is needed in order to be able to truly love another (e.g., as opposed to being passively dependent). “To say I love you, one must first know how to say the ‘I’ ” (Rand, 1943, p. 376). Romantically, self-esteem comes before, not after, love. One loves another because one gets selfish pleasure from their character, their company and their person; love is a form of trade but the trade is not material but spiritual. To love another includes being concerned with their welfare and can even involve risking one’s life if life without that person would be meaningless.

Intelligence: Real and Artificial

When I was in college, a famous psychologist declared that “intelligence is whatever intelligence tests measure,” thus confessing that he did not know what they measured. Objectivism would define intelligence as the capacity to grasp concepts (or, to grasp a wide range of abstractions). The term capacity here need not refer to innate capacity (which cannot yet be measured directly); it can simply refer to: capacity right now. Objectivism has no position on the relative role of heredity vs. environment (a scientific issue) but would add a third factor into the causal equation: volition (free will). Since thinking is a volitional process, thinking must affect the degree to which one develops whatever innate cognitive capacity one is born with and utilizes whatever environmental opportunities for learning are provided. The latter would include taking steps to make one’s own opportunities by choosing and creating situations (Bandura, 1997). Examples would be: routinely exerting mental effort and looking for people and places that facilitate, allow or encourage learning.

It is interesting to note that although researchers thus far have suggested that much of the variance in intelligence is environmental (Jensen, 1981), they have not been very successful in directly accounting for this environmental variation, although formal education is obviously one factor. Actually, what is called “environmental” variance is simply the variance in intelligence left over after heredity is accounted for. (This is often called the “non-shared” environment.) I suggest that not all this variance lies in the environment; some of it lies in the choices the person makes. People can make themselves smarter or less smart based on the degree to which they exert mental effort. While such actions are self-caused, the degree to which a person exerts mental effort is, in principle, measurable.

The claim that there are “multiple intelligences” (Gardner, 1996) is only defensible to the degree that one is talking about different types of concepts (e.g., qualitative vs. quantitative) or cognitive operations using concepts (e.g., deduction and induction). If the term is extended to cover other types of abilities (e.g., music, sports, making friends) that do not involve understanding distinctive types of concepts, then the term intelligence is robbed of all coherent meaning.

As to artificial intelligence (e.g., chess-playing machines) it must be held in mind that computers perform only one basic operation: they turn electrical currents on and off exactly as they are programmed to do. Any “intelligence” that they demonstrate is entirely a result of the intelligence of the programmers, not of the machines. Machines are not conscious. If a group of machines wanted to demonstrate true human intelligence, then I would suggest challenging them to pass not the Turing test but the Locke test: let them turn themselves on, program themselves, and then create human beings--just as we have created computers.

Conclusion

It is clear that Objectivism is very much at odds with most contemporary viewpoints in psychology. It departs from behaviorism in rejecting materialism and affirming free will and the usefulness of introspection. It diverges from Freudianism in rejecting the idea of an all-powerful, unconscious id. It rejects positivism by allowing consciousness into science. It disagrees with the humanist emphasis on subjectivism and the religionist emphasis on the supernatural. It goes against every tenet of post-modernism, especially its claims that all language is subjective and that objectivity is an illusion (a self-refuting tenet).

If there is a single unifying principle in Objectivist philosophy, it is the advocacy of reason. It views reason as the source of knowledge (based on the material provided by the senses), the locus of free will, the faculty of concept-formation, the director of introspection, the basis for self-esteem, the key to achieving emotional harmony, and the tool for discovering objective values. This is why Ayn Rand viewed reason as man’s basic means of survival. I find it quite shocking to read psychology journals such as the *American Psychologist* and never see any mention of the importance of reason in human life. In fact, to the extent that reason gets mentioned at all, it is typically in the context of its limitations and inadequacies. For example, Schneider (1998) specifically attacks rational thinking (and the enlightenment era) as being too superficial and advocates “Romanticism” as an antidote. Romanticism (which has nothing to do with Rand’s use of the term in esthetics), as Schneider describes it, is focused on: feeling, intuition, “depth”, existential awareness, phenomenology, spirituality, social consciousness, bodily understanding, transcendence, meditation and post-modernism—or, in sum, emotionalist subjectivism plus mysticism. He alleges that only romanticism can give us knowledge of the “whole” person, but the truth is the exact opposite. Emotions cannot even be understood without the use of reason; and to understand the whole person in depth requires a massive act of conceptual integration that only a thinking mind could achieve.

The issue may be more urgent today than ever. Most people, psychologists included, probably would agree that our culture is not very healthy. In movies and on the streets there is mindless violence everywhere. In theater and literature there is non-intelligibility, in music non-tonality and non-harmony, in politics non-integrity, in education non-standards, in journalism non-objectivity, in art non-identity, on campus non-intellectuality, and in law non-responsibility (victim psychology). The integrating principle behind all of these examples is *the enthronement of emotionalism as the distinguishing feature of our culture*. A British critic (Anderson, 1998) has called us the “sentimental society” where even God’s nature has to be modified by the religionists in order to make him less judgmental, since absolute moral standards might upset people. Sentimentalism, he writes, “is essentially escapist. It involves the substitution of

appearance for reality, of wishes for facts, of self-indulgence for restraint, and of victimhood for personal responsibility” (Anderson, 1998, p. A-14).

Psychologists must take part of the blame for this. They have, for the most part, rejected mindless behaviorism but they have replaced it with mindless emotionalism. Most psychologists reject Freud’s explicit theory of personality but many have implicitly accepted his view that reason is either impotent or irrelevant and that any frustration of a desire (or any negative emotion) is unhealthy.

Why not the whole blame? Because in regard to philosophy, psychologists are not the independent but the dependent variable. Not even the post-modernists are primarily to blame. The arch villain of the drama is Immanuel Kant. Kant was the first philosopher to declare that there is a fundamental breach between reason and reality—that reason (consciousness) is unable to grasp the real or noumenal world and could only give us an uncertain awareness of the phenomenal world. According to Kant “What men perceive is not reality ‘as it is,’ but merely reality as it *appears* to man, given the special structure of the human mind,” (Peikoff, 1982, p. 23). Kant, an ardent Christian, writes, “I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*” (Kant, 1956, p. 29). A long line of anti-reason, anti-reality philosophers followed (e.g., Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche). Post-modernism, i.e., skepticism, is the end result—the dead end of philosophy. It is a very short road between post-modernism and nihilism. When one is convinced that nothing can be known and everything is arbitrary, including values, one is left with only one guide to action: emotions. An orgy of irrationalism must follow with destruction for the sake of destruction as the end. The religionists are right about one thing: there can be no meaning in life when all values are trivialized. But the issue is deeper: there can be no life at all if reason is destroyed.

Objectivism stands as the only secular antidote (and refutation) of Kantianism (Ghate, 2003; Ghate & Locke, 2003) and post-modernism. In upholding and validating the reality of the external world, the efficacy of reason, and the objectivity of values, it provides the only modern and the only objective basis for attributing to man both freedom and dignity.

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