

Where I'm At Philosophically (Questioning Objectivism)

Post by "Cassius" of November 4, 2019 at 5:53 AM

Kyle - Prior to ten years ago I spent a lot of time reading Objectivist literature. However I never spent much time in the company of actual objectivists, as I found the more someone was "into" Rand, the more uncomfortable I became. At the moment I would start with two points:

1. Her "emotions are not tools of cognition" leads to rationalism and is very much opposite to Epicurus' canon, which includes "feeling" in a primary role, but not "reason."
2. In her epistemology, she focuses on measurement omission as the means for forming concepts. It seems to me that this is very similar to "sensation omission" and as you know, Epicurus holds sensation as the only way to reach reliable knowledge.

Both of these are just rough thoughts but indicate the depth of the divide. The real problem is not so much that these two statements may not have some technical merit, but that many of her followers seem to take statements like these very superficially and as a result tend toward being emotionless rationalists rather than actually pursuing pleasurable living. And of course that same can be applied to her "money speech" in AS and many other things.

In other venues, and over time perhaps even here, you will see some fans of Epicurus say dismissively that Rand is not worth discussing. However it is my view that much of the problem with Rand (not all) is useful for dealing with Aristotle and even Plato too. So this is a subject I think we should be happy to discuss, and in the future I might even set up a subforum dedicated to the subject. I personally think that a lot of good people go down a very wrong path by following Rand, but not for the reasons that the "Academic Epicureans" would have you believe. Discussing this coolly without undue hostility would be helpful to a lot of people who I think misdiagnose the problem with Rand, and even some who misdiagnose Epicurus.

Plus, as you say, *some* of her material is good, and I would even largely endorse it today, such as her "Philosophy - Who Needs It?" speech.

As you address in your post, Rand preaches happiness as the proper goal, but her version of it is much different than was Epicurus - although if you dig deep enough in her older essays you can find some decent discussion of pleasure and pain.

Please flesh out details you would like to discuss. Also, it would be helpful to know how much Rand you have read.