

## THE RIGHTWING RANDIAN BLANKOUT SYNDROME (R2BS), PT. 1

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*"What do you mean, check my premises?!"*

*"He who has long been intimate with one great author, will always be found to be a formidable antagonist; he has ... shaped his faculties insensibly to himself by his model, and he is like a man who ever sleeps in his armor. (From the old Latin proverb, Cave ab homine unius libri: Be cautious of the man of one book.)"—Isaac D'Israeli*

*Advisory: This column is likely of primary interest to individuals who have some familiarity with Ayn Rand and the libertarian movement. But I do think it identifies some important intellectual impediments to full human "flourishment"... that should be of general interest to all literate, caring people.*

The D'Israeli quotation, engraved above the entrance of the Detroit Public Library, sticks in my mind across the years. As a student at Wayne State University in the early 1970s, I realized the inscription might apply to me. I had certainly become an intense partisan of the novels of Ayn Rand and her philosophy of Objectivism. Her passionate idealism was tall tonic for my thirsty young spirit, and I sought to emulate the qualities of her heroes.

But trying to conform to her elaborate and intricate system of ideas did present some difficulty; I lost track of myself for a while. The core ideas were and are gut-and-society-wrenchingly powerful:

Objectivism holds a) that reality is objective, it exists and "is what it is" independently of anyone's consciousness, b) that reason is our only means for knowing reality, c) that we are ends in ourselves, not the means to the ends of others, and we should be "rationally selfish" in living our lives, and d) that the only valid political-economic system is laissez-faire capitalism.

My enthusiasm for the core ideas led to chairmanship of the Wayne State Students of Objectivism—in those days everyone except Leonard Peikoff and a select few in the New York inner sanctum was perpetually relegated to "student" status—then soon metastasized to leadership and activism with the fledgling libertarian movement and Libertarian Party (LMLP). The process toward intellectual independence, in my case, was rather immediate; paraphrasing a friend of mine:

*To live the good life, you must do two things: become an Objectivist and become a human being.*

As the 70s progressed, I worked more toward the latter than toward the former, and my emotional independence shakily followed. In any case, Objectivism, arguably, became the ideological foundation of the LMLP.

The rub is that doctrinaire Objectivists disdained/disdain libertarianism and the LP as a threat to American political salvation, which they assert logically must come through the Republican Party; this strange political preference (for a party that has from its inception extolled the bonecrushing evils of the American corporate state, literally fascism), bred from some of Rand's more hysterical pronouncements in the 70s, is a key overlap with Dittohead Nation.[1]

And that's the direction I'm heading with this analysis:

Since our culture has suffered from a severe philosophical or intellectual vacuum[2], the highly moralistic Randian political-economic worldview—warts and all—has tended to rush into all kinds of voids. Just as Soviet and Nazi propagandists recognized the need to create an aura of morality for their atrocities, our Western monopoly-state-capitalist power-elite, what I have referred to as the Cartel, has rushed to cover its worldwide depredations, in part, by (mis)applying the veneer of Rand's best and most powerful concepts.

The branch of the Cartel that has become Project for a New American Century and The Carlyle Group, among others associated with the Bush-Cheney syndicate, has spawned a number of well-known media boneheads—Ann Coulter, Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Bill O'Reilly come immediately to mind—who derive some popular support for their vile little screed factories from mimicry of the Randian oeuvre.

(Rand was a master of epithets—"whim-worshippers", "moochers", "Attilas and witch-doctors", etc. —and these Cartel mouthpieces dump the same level of vitriol on anyone who disagrees with the smallest step toward imperial tyranny of the American Right... of course, all in the name of fighting the "terror" phantasm and all toward the insane growth and centralization of Cartel power.)

This journalistic and popular appropriation of the best and the worst of Ayn Rand wouldn't be so bad if those who are supposed to carry on her banner—chiefly the monarchical Ayn Rand Institute and the more

tolerant yet Cartel-oblivious Atlas Society (formerly The Objectivist Center)—weren't seemingly in bed with this collection of "imperialistic, faith-based whim-worshippers, moochers, and Attilas/witchdoctors."

When a true dittohead tells us that global warming is a myth, that cheap oil is going to be available forever, that Halliburton and Bechtel morally deserve all the government contracts they can get, that star wars and first use of nuclear weapons make sense, that war is good and necessary, and that liberals (especially the ones who defend the Constitution) are the scourge of the planet... we can attribute their statements to simple boobosie unenlightenment.

But when a genuine Randian, i.e. Objectivist, makes the same sorts of claims—often with the same hatred-laden venom toward the diaphanous bogeyman *du jour*, "the left"—we have to consider the strong possibility of what Rand herself referred to as a "blankout" of consciousness. Meaning rather than engage in a process of reason and discussion to "check one's premises" (another favorite phrase), one prefers to stay stuck in the comfort of old emotional-perceptual patterns.

Hence, a peculiar and relatively dangerous affliction— dangerous because the views one refuses to change are manifestly antireason and thus antilife—is what I have come to call the Right-Wing Randian Blankout Syndrome (R2BS). Today I'm simply going to list some key symptoms of the R2BS from my own experience. (The blankouts mainly take the form of denials):

1. First and foremost, the R2BSer typically denies the existence of conspiracies of power, in particular, denying the existence of the primary hidden cabal that has run the United States government since at least 1913 with the advent of the Federal Reserve Act and the income tax amendment. And if the Cartel exists, it's OK.
2. Second, the denier believes the official story of 911 despite overwhelming in your face evidence that none of the events is logically explained by that fairy tale. (Question: Why has Rudy Giuliani yet to be indicted for destroying evidence at a federal crime scene? He ordered the WTC steel carted off under armed guard and destroyed.)
3. Along the same lines of one and two, the blankout is normally accompanied by failure to consider any instance of government deceit and coverup; from the instigation of World War II, to the assassination of JFK, to the downing of Flight KAL 007, to the Oklahoma City Bombing, to the attacks of 911, and several others where we have overwhelming evidence of the government's sustained deceit and coverup of major crimes, most of which the government executed.
4. Denying the orthodox theory of global warming, namely that humans, by burning fossil fuels for transport and power generation, are warming the Earth's surface and atmospheric temperatures through emissions of carbon dioxide (which reflects radiation energy back to earth); also denying it's a problem. (This is sometimes known as the "anything Al Gore says is wrong" blankout.)
5. Fifth, failing to grasp the fundamental flaw in the state's franchising of monopoly corporate power, failing to see the violation of the nonaggression principle that occurs by granting privileges (derived from the Latin "private law") to business interests and affording these business entities unequal protection before the law.
6. Sixth, probably the most critical blankout is support for the American state in its unconstitutional CIA-led military aggressions in the Middle East and killings, tortures, and disappearances everywhere on the premise of a terror threat concocted by the Cartel through the "new Pearl Harbor" of the 911 attacks. Uncritical support for the American war machine in general is a huge blankout and a colossal problem.
7. Lately a movement has emerged that may be called the "demonization of the left." Many Randians are peculiarly susceptible to this nonsense, namely that all the evils we face—from civil liberties violations to theft of our precious bodily fluids—are caused by vicious America-hating leftists (come out wherever you are). They are not caused by the fascist American-hating government that's on our backs, and on our fronts, every day. "Ignore that man behind the curtain."
8. Finally, on the civil liberties issue, unless you've been living in a cave for the past 40 years or you've lost your senses, most sane people acknowledge the war on drugs as the singlemost irrational and destructive government policy ever inflicted on humanity outside perhaps the mass murders by governments and collectivist mobs during the 20th century. Most Randians I know have blanked out the drug war as a vital issue entirely.

9. One more thing, though not truly a subject of blanking anything out, most Objectivists have little regard for the life extension or transhumanist movements. "However many years Howard Roark and John Galt (Galt was a smoker) got is good enough for me."

Note: Not all Objectivists suffer from R2BS.

We can see that denial of objective reality—denial of the Aristotelian/Randian-articulated laws of existence, identity, and causality—is a key factor in most of the above symptoms. Thus there are grounds for hope for successful treatment via application of Natural Reason. Next week, I'll elaborate. (*It had become clear, especially from the time required to provide the above background and context, this topic exceeds the boundaries of a single column.*)

Please let me have your comments on the CC Forum.

[1] Dittohead has become a term describing the fans of Rush Limbaugh; they regard the term as a compliment.

[2] Obviously, this is a broad assertion that is worth several columns of its own. Briefly, my justification for the assertion is as follows: "Faith (of one kind or another) and force" have held sway in culture above "reason and liberty" for centuries. Accordingly, the ideas in academe or in politics have tended toward "reconstituted cat whiskers," that is warmed-over drivel succeeding only in putting a happy face on "faith and force." Ergo, intellectually bankrupt.

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