The Capitalist Ideal: A Tripart Ideal

Independence

Loneliness and alone are two separate ideas. We don’t want to be abandoned by those around us, but a desire to have privacy and be rewarded for being independent are coded into the very neurons that make up our brains. Neuroscientists have begun to believe that emotions are cognitive structures from a constructivist view. There is no isolated centre or module, but a whole system of feedback mechanisms spanning the entire brain, from cortex to the more primitive amygdala.

Loneliness is an emotional state of low pleasure, but alone and independence are two of the most rewarding feelings that one can have or attain. From this constructivist view, we form concepts of what it is to be separate entities, with a sense of self and achievement. Maslow’s hierarchy may suffer from lack of evidence, but intuitively it makes sense. When we fulfill our prime urges, we then need a sense of belongingness. However, this belongingness is not a desperate need for approval, and so we’re better off selfish and independent.

Sex is another category that fits nicely into a constructivist framework. Although I haven’t seen it in the literature, I would assume that sex can be socially implemented according to certain mores and conventions. This would make belongingness an acute sense of merging with the other. Also, there is evidence of oxytocin being a bonding hormone that brings belongingness to the forefront of neuroscientific research into social psychology.

So, this need to be alone is not in sharp contradistinction to the findings. It is but another way of saying that while social interaction is a prime motivator, the study of motivation would not get off the ground without a firm adherence to the notion of privacy and its corollaries.

The Lottery

As a consumer of many a marketable product, I am not one to buy into the notion of lottery winnings. The goal of attaining a livelihood is justified by the means by which we attain it. There is no reward in an unearned attainment of anything, whether it be money or sex as in prostitution.

I have no beef with a company selling lottery tickets as a product for consumption by the public. But I, myself, am not personally interested. Just like I wouldn’t buy a self help book because I think it is pop psychology, I would not buy a lottery ticket. Lottery cannot even be seen as startup capital because it isn’t invested from an earned savings of money.

Inheritance is a similar matter. Although I am not opposed to the idea of inheritance as a free transmission of capital, I believe it should not be the prime source of income for an individual. One who falls into great inheritance as a birthright may invest that capital appropriately, but they should not look on the initial investment as an achievement.
Only money earned through a process of skill and good enterprise is worth any value psychologically. Self-worth is deeply entwined with production in the sense that it is from our own efforts that we gain esteem.

To wrap up this part, I refer you to all the self-made entrepreneurs that created wealth for themselves and others through effort issuing from their own minds. Beauty, physical and intellectual, are givens, but the effort expended is shared with sources outside ourselves, rather than genes, that transmitted ideas through social intercourse and helped commit them to memory over years, and according to meme theory, millennia.

Ayn Rand’s Idealistic Vision

Ayn Rand had a vision of capitalism that was an undesired ideal. It wasn’t just unrealistic, it was something that would work if we ignore society. Yes, society is a set of individuals. But she tries to squeeze out government like it’s an unwanted pimple. The truth is, politicians have rights too. And if we are to allow them discretionary privileges, we must allow them to use their budget in ways they deem desirable.

Capitalism is definitely suffering from a mixed economy, but a welfare state is not socialism. Welfare, in its bare minimum form is a gesture on the part of government towards the underprivileged. If tax money educates, protects, and builds, why can’t it help the less fortunate? Another idealistic vision is a tax free society. Is there any empirical evidence to justify this claim?

Atlas Shrugged is not a utopian vision, it’s not a nightmare either, it’s just that, a vision. Ayn Rand expects the world to develop without people adhering to a guiding norm. She expects us to be sheep. Not a fascist in practice, granted, but a preacher who advocates the critical mind, and yet flies in the face of empirical evidence.

Okay, okay, she’s not that bad. But she should check her claims before putting them forth as if they were the final word, etched in stone like eternal commandments. If she is to have any effect, my criticism of her should be a point in her favour. Always question.

I do agree with most, in fact a majority, of her points. And her epistemology is flawless. But there’s some things I just can’t digest. Maybe I’m missing the Randian enzyme: Randase. But if I do get it, it won’t be from ignoring my own mind, that would contradict her main philosophy.