



The Owl of Athena

CONTRATYRANNOS

The Natural Law Theory of Human Progress Website

EXCURSUS 10

One of a series of monographs that expands the discussion of important topics examined in *The Natural State of Medical Practice*.¹

AFTER PHILOSOPHY: OBJECTIVISM AND NATURAL LAW THEORY OF HUMAN PROGRESS COMPARED

Summary: Epidemiological proofs presented in *The Natural State of Medical Practice* support the natural law theory of human progress. They also support core tenets of Objectivist philosophy and the concept of natural law. Furthermore, the morality of Objectivism is consistent with that of Judeo-Christianity. Despite its refutation of religion or any intellectual discipline based on faith, the limitations of this Objectivist stance are reviewed and a justification for mutual accommodation is presented. For Objectivism it is central to its philosophy that individuals do not transgress another's life. That principle is acknowledged to be ancient and cosmopolitan (including Judeo-Christian) and active today via the human conscience as natural law. The natural law theory of human progress identifies the practical consequences to society of ignoring that principle. The problem is, not surprisingly, authoritarian governance by a political elite. When that authoritarianism is blocked, civil liberty will lead to success of the entrepreneurial group, and the community as a whole will benefit. Replace the immorality of authoritarian governance and there will be little need for philosophy-derived correctives.

Note: The assumptions in this excursus will be more readily understood if Excursus 4 (True Virtue, A Consequence of Natural Law), 6 (Natural Law, the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule Compared), and, especially, 8 (Human Liberty and Judeo-Christian Ethos) have been reviewed in advance.

Introduction

Natural Law Theory of Human Progress: A theory ascribing all apolitical advances for the betterment of mankind to autonomous associations pursuing self-betterment in which each member has equal opportunity to speak freely and share ideas about the group's common interest without fear of retribution. Axiomatically it excludes "betterments" that have been stolen, copied, derived by exploitation, or used for subjugation of others.

¹ Volume, chapter and page number of otherwise unreferenced statements in this monograph refer to the version of the four volumes as published by Liberty Hill Press:

Vol. 1 – *The Natural State of Medical Practice: An Isagorial Theory of Human Progress*

Vol. 2 – *The Natural State of Medical Practice: Hippocratic Evidence*

Vol. 3 - *The Natural State of Medical Practice: Escape from Egalitarianism*

Vol. 4 – *The Natural State of Medical Practice: Implications*

Derived from the social history of medical practice over the ages, natural law theory of human progress identifies the source of human progress, and it may be asked why a modern living philosophy like Objectivism would in any way be sufficiently related to justify inclusion in an excursus. The answer is that (1) Objectivism is in some ways identical to natural law theory of human progress, (2) both are consistent with natural law, and (3) Objectivism has both a popular and a political presence in today's world. Perhaps they can complement each other.

Natural law theory of human progress is a factual explanation of human progress, not a philosophy. If found to be correct it could be used as a guide to prevent the regression of human progress that is shown in *The Natural State of Medical Practice* to have occurred in all past civilizations.

In contrast, Objectivism is a philosophy and, like other philosophies, is a study of ideas. Its focus is the individual life rather than advocating a course for civilization, although it favors political guarantees regarding individual rights and entrepreneurial capitalism. Any effect of Objectivism on society is found only in the cumulative effect of its adherents. And to the extent that it has a political face the purpose is solely to protect and advance interests of the individual Objectivist.

While developing *The Natural State of Medical Practice* I unexpectedly became aware of similarities between natural law theory of human progress, oriented to society, and Objectivism, oriented to the individual. Moreover, and surprisingly, I found the same features are also core tenets of Judeo-Christianity. This excursus describes those shared features.

In exposing this commonality, it is hoped that the three, in intellectual partnership, formal or no, will strengthen the firewall that must protect humanity from the present menacing power and rhetoric of collectivist authoritarian governance and dogma. If protection is not forthcoming, we will lose the source of, and permit the regression of, human progress obtained thus far.

Some definitions used herein:

1. Philosophy – the study of ideas about knowledge, truth, the nature and meaning of life, etc. (Merriam-Webster dictionary)
2. Objectivism - the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life (Ayn Rand). A brief dictionary definition of Objectivism, such as “any of various theories asserting the validity of objective phenomena over subjective experience,” is too anemic to be useful.² On the other hand, philosophy as an intellectual exercise deals with matters not subject to scientific proof because they “cannot be answered by either observation or calculation, by either inductive methods or deductive.”³ Objectivism, from this description and like other philosophies, cannot be objectively supported by facts even though it is supported by “reason” based only on facts; it is objective in the minds of a proponent because that person's reason makes a fact intelligible in distinct ways, but determining what is reasonable about reason is subject to subjectivity.
3. Natural rights - the right to life, liberty, property and pursuit of happiness, rights considered inherent and universal (*e.g.*, as described in the Declaration of Independence and supported in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States of America). I find

² Merriam-Webster dictionary, definition (1).

³ *The Purpose of Philosophy*, found in: Berlin, I., *Concepts and Categories*, 2nd ed., H. Hardy, editor, Princeton University Press, 2013.

philosophical support for this interpretation in Prof. H. L. A. Hart's concept of "general" rights: if they are capable of choice, "all men equally have the right to be free," they "do not arise out of any special relationship or transaction between men," and "To assert a general right is to claim in relation to some particular action the equal right of all men to be free."⁴

4. Natural Law – A body of unchanging moral principles regarded as a basis for all human conduct (Oxford English Dictionary). It is the unwritten law in every human being whereby conscience guides discernment between good and evil, thereby protecting natural rights of others from us and advising others to do the same for our natural rights. Opinions differ as to its origin.

Origin of our political threats

In Excursus 6 the equivalence of natural law (as *per* Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*), the ethical laws of the Ten Commandments (*Exodus* 20:2-17), and the Golden Rule (*Matthew* 7:12) is proposed, with their common message being an inviolable statement on human liberty: Do not transgress (contravene) the rights of others. Through these direct and indirect guides we are able to differentiate good from bad.

But throughout human history it is the centralized political power of authoritarian governance that has defined what constitutes good and evil for its citizenry, its purpose being to ensure hegemony over the individual by the State. In doing so the State has assumed the position of omnipotence, thereby limiting the options by which the unprivileged citizenry might abide by natural law and coercing or tempting them to embrace and comply with mandates often inconsistent with natural law. How does all this relate to the philosophy of Objectivism, which is categorically atheistic and would categorically deny this entire excursus?

Objectivist philosophy is the subject of this excursus because of its uncompromising stand, often condemned for its seeming selfishness, for individual liberty. And it is that protection against infringement on the rights of the individual, regardless of whether one considers them bestowed on mankind or not, that is the principal issue in this excursus. It includes not only protection against infringement by other individuals but also against infringement by institutions, including governance of any sort.

The issues

Despite the similarity in Objectivism and natural law theory of human progress regarding freedom, as a philosophy of life Objectivism is profoundly personal and promotes freedom to unshackle man so as to enable him to lead a moral life guided by his reason. Natural law theory of human progress, on the other hand, works through society and can be a guide to unshackle society so as to foster progress and make a civilization civil. This excursus will attempt to show that natural law theory of human progress rides shotgun for philosophies opposing authoritarianism in general, but that it is most consistent in the implementation of Objectivism. It

⁴ Hart, H. L. A., *Are There Any Natural Rights?*, in *The Philosophical Review*, 64:175-191, 1955. Issues related to legal implications of competing "rights" are irrelevant here.

is, however, inconsistent with the tendency of Objectivism to avoid any association with religion, defined generally as faith in a god or God but usually directed at Judeo-Christianity. That stance will be shown to be both unnecessary and counterproductive.

Objectivism is a philosophy that, like other philosophies, has been the source of endless discussion, criticism, praise, and sophistic hairsplitting. It is true that Objectivism is a fully developed philosophy, whereas natural law theory of human progress is proposed as merely an explanation of the mechanism of human progress. In fact, my studies that led to the natural law theory of human progress were initially to determine what could provide today's medical practice with guidance in the future, not to advocate for a philosophy of life. But it is argued that, without that history of freedom for the unprivileged, the "common" men and women as recognized by the natural law theory of human progress, a philosophy of life such as Objectivism could never have come into existence. One reason to compare Objectivism with natural law theory of human progress and to promote their co-existence is to maintain aspects of the social environment that permitted Objectivism to appear in the first place and influence mankind for the last seventy-five years in hopes that it will continue to do so.

Objectivism may be fine for the individual, but does it harm or improve the condition of others? If what is good for that individual is good for other people, then it (unintentionally) does good. It could be the good done by the individual Objectivist, or it could be the spread of Objectivism to other individuals that permits them to improve their personal condition. This is an important question because (1) it may ally a valued personal philosophy with our attempts to continue to improve the conditions that surround our daily lives, and (2) Objectivism would acquire an element of scientific objectivity (unequivocal human good; see Excursus 2) that supports the usefulness to others of a philosophy based on human reason that specifically excludes contributing to the benefit of society as a purposeful goal.⁵ Let us examine areas of common interest for the natural law theory of human progress, Objectivism, and Judeo-Christianity: morality, natural rights and natural law, Judeo-Christian ethos, faith vs. reason, free will, virtue, and capitalism.

1. Morality:

The following statement of Ayn Rand is at the core of Objectivism:

"... each individual morally must be left free to act on his own judgment – and each individual morally must leave others free to act on theirs." (found in *Ayn Rand's Theory of Rights: The Moral Foundation of a Free Society*, Craig Biddle, 8/20/11. This is a good synopsis of Rand's ideas.)

This statement represents moral absolutism and thus is meant to apply to everyone. Objectivism rejects working for the common good *per se* and, to the extent working for the common good detracts from rational self-interest, would consider such an action immoral, certainly so when coerced. In the natural law theory of human progress, however, it is shown that acting in rational self-interest (usually via an autonomous group, or *koinon* [κοινόν]; see *The Natural State of Medical Practice*, vol. 1, p. 168ff) is the source of the ideas and impetus that improves not only the condition of the individual having the idea for personal betterment but also the other members

⁵ Cleary, S. C., *Philosophy shrugged: ignoring Ayn Rand won't make her go away*, in the digital magazine *Aeon*, June 22, 2018.

of the group, and it may ultimately further the common good, *i.e.*, an “unintended good” or example of “spontaneous order,” and not immoral in the eyes of Objectivists.⁶ It may be, therefore, that there is no need to distinguish between the morality of self-interest and the common good in a free society. When they move together the ship will right itself regardless of motive. And they will always move together, for entrepreneurial benefits are realized solely via their popular response. The two are thus inextricably associated (See Excursus 4 for more on motive). At the least, Objectivism and the natural law theory of human progress can be mutual but distinct partners. If this is so, popularization of Objectivism could be an unintended good for society. All of this is not a new idea, for Ayn Rand considered capitalism beneficial for the poor, although that was not its purpose. It is proposed that Objectivism, like the natural law theory of human progress, can be associated with and can promote this approach to the unintended common good, *in effect an intentional unintended good: we know it will produce good; we just don't know what that good will be*. In this setting, natural law theory of human progress explains a mechanism that helps clear the path for human progress, and Objectivism arms the individuals that will use that path.

In Objectivism it is not the thought of doing good for society that is the issue. It is, instead, the immorality of infringement on the time and effort of the individual who is striving for self-betterment or the moral weakness of that individual in permitting himself or herself to be involved or exploited in such a misguided effort that is the problem. Of these two categories of missteps, external coercion would be immoral, but one may truly want to help one's friends or neighbors or groups in other countries in trouble, and this is an expression of humaneness. As discussed in *The Natural State of Medical Practice* (see vol. 1, p. 327ff), humaneness is a virtue and, while virtue is inversely proportional to the authoritarian rigidity of a society, the free society of Objectivism would value it. Humaneness as a virtue is expressed in the novels and personal life of the pioneer of Objectivism, Ayn Rand. There is no issue here; the “common good” should not be a dirty word in Objectivism and a humane act is virtuous so long as it is not commanded.

Also to be considered is whether Objectivism can be associated with evil. Can it at times be considered immoral? In espousing categorical atheism does it take a metaphorical bite from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and in doing so define good and evil on its own terms? It does not, either functionally or ethically according to the Judeo-Christian tenets as expressed in natural law and the ethical Commandments. This is because the definition of immorality in Objectivism and in Judeo-Christianity is similar. Admittedly Objectivism utterly opposes the Golden Rule's seeming altruism and self-sacrifice. But Objectivism should be judged by the Golden Rule inversion, the “silver” rule. The latter can be stated thus: “Do not do unto others what you would not want them to do to you.” (See Excursus 6 for why this is preferable.) To do so is therefore immoral, and this is implied by Ayn Rand in the quotation above. Thus, Objectivism is not a source of evil for society and is in complete sympathy with this core Judeo-Christian tenet, the reason being that it has, through its “reasoning,” arrived at the same final product. In a sense, one might conclude that Ayn Rand merely stumbled onto natural law that was already embedded in her conscience. It was her brilliance that enabled her to explicate it so lucidly for the rest of us.

As for the immorality of coerced working for the common good and its effects on human progress, that is the consequence of authoritarianism rather than a matter of philosophical incontinence of a society. It is a matter of too much power in too few hands of persons who shouldn't be given power, preventing which is the great virtue of a democracy that disseminates power among the people. The people in China do not lack a desire for freedom, a desire to pursue

⁶ Ayn Rand, in the *Ayn Rand Lexicon* (1986) states that “the common good” is a “meaningless concept.”

self-betterment, or competence in creativity and progress. It is the few people holding power and enforcing immoral regulations that are the problem. In other words, rarely is the dilemma of arrested self-interest purely a matter of philosophical immorality or personal choice; it is instead simply a matter of reaction to external authoritarian coercion made possible by centralization of power in the hands of a few, and at times that coercion can be physically brutal. Given freedom to pursue self-betterment, human progress will inevitably occur, will be multifocal, and will disseminate power. The answer to coercion is to stop the coercion. And this is a critical point: it is not necessary to change people's minds. Their minds will rationally change when the coercive force is removed. With the immorality gone, morality will resume its rightful place, as long as no other authoritarian coercion appears and preempts it. Immorality is perpetrated by those who personally interfere with and coercively attempt to direct the lives of others, for they, the transgressors, are the problem, not the perversions of abstract philosophies. In the matter of Germany and WW II, the basic problem was Hitler and the Brownshirts, not Heidegger or national identity. And the freer the society and less the centralization of power, the less of that type of transgression of natural law there will be. But what is natural law in this context?

2. Natural rights and natural law:

The importance to Objectivism of rights that many construe as “natural” was understood by Ayn Rand, but she stated they cannot be justified except by reason and logic:

“[To] rest one's case on faith means to concede ... that one has no rational arguments to offer ... that there are no rational arguments to support the American system, no justification for freedom, justice, property, individual rights, that these rest on a mystic revelation and can be accepted only on faith – that in reason and logic the enemy is right.” (Ayn Rand, *Conservatism: An Obituary*, in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, New York, 1967, p. 197.)

But natural rights, as considered in the Declaration of Independence, are acknowledged as self-evident (*i.e.*, obvious by means of human reason). In this sense of “reason,” and for the purposes of discussion herein, their discovery by reason is similar to that of Objectivism. But some consider rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness as given by God, and thereby natural rights are protected by natural law.

Natural law goes unmentioned in Objectivism. In contrast, centuries, even thousands of years, of reasoning conclude that natural law is inherent and universal and represents our given ability to judge what is good and what is evil, and our natural rights are “goods” that natural law protects. Natural rights say John has a right to life, and natural law therefore says to everyone, it is immoral to take John's life. The latter is a law laid out in our conscience, although a penalty is not specified for disregarding it. It is society that determines the individual penalty using human reason and man-made (“positive”) laws. Actions taken in accordance with natural law are moral and, as discussed in the preceding section, are considered consistent with Rand's Objectivism morality. (Also see Excursus 3.)

Thus, there would seem to be no quarrel between Objectivism and Judeo-Christianity about the appropriateness of natural law whether considered reasoned or not. But there is a difference: in Objectivism natural rights and their protection are arrived at by reason to serve the purposes of an individual, whereas the Judeo-Christian view is that while natural rights and natural law do

serve the individual, they, being inherent and universal, also serve everyone; *i.e.*, they have a broader domain and *serve to stabilize human society; they are our guide for getting along with one another*. The reasoning and logic of Objectivism merely arrive at what is already universally understood by many to be natural law. It is just that Objectivists would (1) disavow any preexisting purpose, and (2) consider the greater social effects to be irrelevant to their philosophy. The issue is more a matter of editing than composing. In a sense, Objectivism might be viewed as putting natural law into practice rather than being just another philosophy.

In another difference, in those instances where natural law is obviously being disregarded, natural law theory of human progress has shown in medical practice that the problem is authoritarianism, specifically political or egalitarian. Man-made law or enforced ideologies in those instances have overshadowed recognition of natural law (which is expressed via our conscience). Thus, natural law is expressed to varying degrees according to circumstances surrounding the individual. In Objectivism natural rights and their need for protection are discovered, all or none, by logic and reason of the individual. There is no half-way Objectivist, whereas natural law becomes evident to all via our conscience to the degree that each individual is willing or able to express, and this can be profoundly affected by external political forces. The issue here should be cooperation rather than an inferred competition.

Despite differences, Objectivism as a philosophy and natural law theory of human progress as a social mechanism are both staunch advocates of natural rights and natural law, even though natural law is not mentioned in Objectivism because it presumes natural law to be mystical in origin. By facing down Rand's "enemy" in separate battles, personally and comprehensively, Objectivism and the natural law theory of human progress would be better off side by side.

And consider the following. Objectivism states that we come to value freedom and our rights on the basis of reason because to be free is natural, *i.e.*, it is moral reality. But no one suddenly comes upon the components of Objectivism already in place. It took years for Ayn Rand to develop her philosophy. It developed as a result of her analysis of her life experiences and scholarship, and its popularity for others is a consequence of the attractiveness of Objectivism as a fully developed philosophy. In contrast, natural law theory of human progress views natural law as inherent in everyone in every age regardless of the society, although it is less perceptible when overwhelmed by man-made laws and ideologies. One might therefore consider that there was a stimulus emerging from natural law that lay behind Rand's desire to memorialize her insightful philosophy in writing, even though presumably she would deny it, saying it was instead based on reality; it was "natural." That, of course, is absolutely true. But in either case, when authoritarianism is minimized, functionality of natural law can, via our conscience, be more readily appreciated and implemented, can assist us in protecting our natural rights, and can keep us from interfering with those of others, *i.e.*, it assists us in making "good" decisions as well as being good neighbors.⁷ Rand was able to let us know of her new philosophy in our (relatively) free society. She didn't "discover" Objectivism. It was already embedded in her conscience. She considered elements of it in university, "invented" it on coming to a free America, embellished it, and was

⁷ Why is natural law so readily overshadowed by man-made ("positive") law? Perhaps there is a reason. Is natural law sometimes wrong? I think not and would rather agree with the suggestion that man-made law is our response to some clear and present danger and sometimes is essential for survival. In practice, therefore, it has been sculpted so as to allow us to temporarily appear to supersede natural law because unanticipated needs of mankind and threats of the world inhabited by mankind. Natural law is of a general nature that can be applied to a variety of circumstances by any individual, whereas positive laws are society-specific and meant for specific problems that develop along the way. Natural law is neither mystical nor subjective. It is real and is expressed in all societies (see *The Natural State of Medical Practice*, volume 3, p. 273ff).

sufficiently prescient to write it down in a compelling form. It is a reasonable speculation, therefore, to consider Objectivism, in part, as a particularly profound but personal argument for the existence of natural law, one made apparent after she left the world of repressive man-made laws and immoral ideologies of a communist Russia.

3. Judeo-Christianity:

Excursus 8 discusses the Judeo-Christian ethos, its relation to individualism and freedom, and its place in the initiation of human progress that has guided the West, and subsequently the world, since the Reformation. In a teleological sense, it has helped make the world safe for Objectivism. It concludes, arguably, that had not the Reformation occurred the world could still be living in the 15th C.

Individualism and freedom, of course, are the *sine qua non* of Objectivism. But Objectivism the philosophy is a product of the mind of one person in the mid-20th C. The vast leaps in individual wealth and well-being around the world have not resulted from ruminations on the benefits of an Objectivist philosophy. Nevertheless, it certainly could be argued that Objectivism has contributed to the recent Western, and thereby global, progress traceable to the Reformation, if for no other reason than many prominent and successful persons in the West have espoused or admired its message. But the point is, without Western freedoms there would be no such thing as Objectivism. No other culture would have permitted it. It is unexpected, therefore, that there has been expressed no affinity of the one for the other (*i.e.*, Objectivism for Judeo-Christianity).

One explanation for this detachment can be laid to the rigid exemption by Objectivism of anything that smacks of the metaphysical as defined by study of matters outside objective experience, which includes spirituality and faith. And yet, as human progress was begat long before Objectivism and as Objectivism itself exists as a consequence of freedoms traceable to the Reformation, there seems to be no reason for reticence against religion. In fact, there is superficial similarity between Objectivism and Reformation views. In the latter it was sometimes considered a right and responsibility to render oneself prosperous and fit, because to purposely become poor or infirm means one becomes a liability to someone else and cannot be of assistance to anyone should that occasion be necessary. In fact, being self-reliant and prosperous was considered evidence of a blessing from God to the point that even religious donations became unpopular. And Judeo-Christianity has no quarrel with a philosophy of individualism and freedom whose popularity is possible because of Judeo-Christian tenets. If Objectivism would but acknowledge there is no moral incompatibility between Judeo-Christianity and science, which there is not (Aristotle and Aquinas have much in agreement on this point), it would move Objectivism to the forefront of the dominant philosophies.

4. Faith vs. Reason:

Lifelong, most human decisions are based on reason, so a discussion of basic reasoning is unnecessary. Faith is reasoning based on a relative level of confidence of something. It is, therefore, a corollary of reason but is inculcated to varying degrees. And that is their basic distinction; the ability to reason is inherent, but faith in what is reasoned depends on experience and circumstances, and the degree of faith for the most part depends on one's estimate of the risk,

or chance, or opportunity, of something being true, and this includes those who, in the presence of honesty, unconditionally accept the opinions of others who base their “faith” on evidence.

Objectivism considers it unnecessary that the world have a cause, and to speculate on the matter is of no consequence and even pernicious. But to say that our universe has always existed or that it popped into being out of nothingness is incomprehensible. Everything we objectively know through our senses had a beginning and a cause. To think otherwise is therefore logically unreasonable. Humans have universally felt a need to hypothesize on the beginning of our world, and to speculate on its cause is a reasonable first step. It is a very basic step because it is an expression of natural curiosity, which is to explore those things which seem inconsistent with prior observations. Thus, we look for a reason. It is not only reasonable; it is natural and even transpecific; curiosity killed the cat. It would be unreasonable to expect or require a person to forego his curiosity about the origin of the universe or our world. In this sense, Objectivism has arbitrarily positioned itself beyond reason.

More in question here is not faith in one’s ability to estimate risk in the material world: the strength of a rope, one’s ability to jump a crevice, the abscess healing on its own. It is metaphysical faith. Metaphysical faith is sometimes considered at the far end of a spectrum of what might be called wishful thinking, and it is said to contain no objective elements of proof. But metaphysical faiths often claim to have proofs that support the faith. This is natural, for proofs aid understanding and bolster faith by increasing the chance something is true. Samuel Johnson, although a passionate communicant of the Church of England, was said to eagerly seek evidence surrounding reports of miracles. He sought additional proofs despite his faith.

But are not material faith and metaphysical faith the same? Reason and logic are actually insufficient in themselves to serve our best interests unless they embrace faith. Many decisions require faith (in our ability to estimate risk or chance) when they are implemented. Faith in oneself is necessary for many of life’s successes. As another example, the natural law theory of human progress may be useful, for it is a theory, not a hypothesis, and it is supported by objective proof as presented in *The Natural State of Medical Practice*. While it is indeed a theory, we can have faith in its relevance to society to the extent that its proofs are deemed sound.

It has been stated in Objectivism that “atheism is not a negation, but rather an affirmation of reality, of reason’s ability to know it, and of man’s ability to create meaning for himself.” In such a philosophy everything becomes relative, just as it was for Nietzsche and Sartre. But atheism as a disdain of faith is merely a side-show to Objectivism. It nevertheless needs as much thoughtful consideration as any other doctrine. Varieties of atheism include ethical, psychological, metaphysical, pragmatism, and epistemological.⁸ The value of this list by George Hamilton Smith is in its identification of the self-defeating logic those types of atheism present. It conveniently delegitimizes them for us, thereby greatly reducing the number of atheistic arguments that need to be addressed concerning the atheism of Objectivism, and the latter is, simply put, opposition to any form of mysticism. If, however, Judeo-Christianity is found to not be mystical, even in part, then the wall between it and Objectivism may be breached.

To the above point, Judeo-Christian faith abounds in truths. Biblical descriptions are increasingly scientifically verified as modern scientific techniques have made a search for them possible.⁹ The case is easily made that one can justify faith in the Bible because it has been proven to be a valid literary source for, and confirmation of, many historical events, predictions and

⁸ Smith, G., *Atheism & Objectivism*, in *Reason*, Nov., 1973.

⁹ Metaxas, E., *Is Atheism Dead?*, Washington, DC, 2021.

persons, including those relevant to Judeo-Christianity itself. If the check engine lights are off, we have a fair level of faith that our car will not break down when we drive to the store.

But it can be argued that even if the mysticism argument remains intact, there may be a gate through the wall. Faith (from *fides*: trust or faith, as in *bona fides*, in good faith) is trust, and that trust is based on one's belief on the certainty of something. It is, therefore, a corollary of reason, for it represents a reasoned estimate of the risk, or chance, of something being true, as described earlier. It is argued, however, that faith is that amount of confidence we have in something that is *beyond what is realistic or reasonable*. But determining what degree separates realistic or unrealistic is a function of reason, and it is but natural that there will be varied estimates of that degree. Instead, Objectivism objects to any evidence whatsoever of the mystical, the latter defined as "neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence."¹⁰ But the Judeo-Christian faith is based on oral and written commentary documenting its early appearance and rise. Assuming several overlapping accounts of aspects of the life of Christ were the basis for the four canonical gospels (admittedly a debated point), Samuel Johnson could state that, given the remoteness of the events, the similarities among the four gospels would represent a level of scientific proof of the accuracy of the New Testament that most science would envy. Judeo-Christianity is not a fairytale first dreamed up by a drugged shaman. Proofs abound that support its historicity. It is only the *degree of reasonableness* in interpretation of those proofs that should be the issue, not a "yes" or "no" on the proposed proofs themselves. And so it is the "degree of reasonableness" that is the gate through the wall. If that gate is kept shut, it will prove the unreasonableness of Objectivism and sadly link it with the illogic of the other forms of atheistic philosophies that will gather dust on the shelves of academics.

I won't mention here the idea of seeing through solid opaque structures in 1894, which would surely have been considered mysticism.¹¹ But it has been argued by many that life itself is an incontestable miracle that science, despite decades of directed study, is absolutely unable to explain. This is incontestably true. As life clearly exists, it is those who deny it being a miracle of ordered creation that are displaying the greater faith. Objectivism should qualify its delegitimization of the Judeo-Christian faith and remove categorical atheism as an exclusionary philosophical principle because atheism and non-atheism are both faiths.¹²

5. Free will:

In espousing free will, Objectivism joins with Judeo-Christian tenets as laid out in Excursus 8. It also distances itself from other major "religions" that find significant problems with the concept of free will. Zoroastrianism is an exception.

6. Virtue:

Craig Biddle has listed some virtues consistent with Objectivism, including independent thinking, productiveness, justice, honesty, and self-interest.¹³ Varying lists of virtues accompany

¹⁰ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mystical>.

¹¹ In 1895 Wilhelm Roentgen discovered, by a coincidence, "X" rays.

¹² To believe that our universe has always existed or resulted from an arbitrary physical explosion out of nothingness based on proofs in hand requires an enormous leap of faith. At least creation by intelligent design is based on logical reasoning.

¹³ The article by Craig Biddle is found at www.TheObjectivistStandard.com, Feb., 2014.

various philosophies. But what are deemed virtues in one circumstance may not be so in another. Loyalty to one's fellow gang members engaged in robberies is not a virtue. And as discussed in *The Natural State of Medical Practice*, virtue is considered impossible in the absence of freedom, and so the above listed virtues, as qualities necessary for adhering to one's philosophy of life, could be altered or redefined to accommodate the State or made impossible in a strictly authoritarian world. In contrast, it was argued in *The Natural State of Medical Practice* that there is one overarching virtue that is a constant in any circumstance and cannot be turned into something monstrous, and that virtue is adherence to natural law (see Excursus 4).

If we take self-betterment as a virtue in a free society, how does it hold up as a virtue in the natural law theory of human progress. Adherence to natural law prohibits taking something from others without their consent. It follows that mere existence requires that a person be self-reliant.¹⁴ The degree of subsistence is irrelevant. To live in a humble disheveled hut or in a stately mansion depends on the social orientation, opportunities, abilities and priorities of the individual. In either case, if self-reliance is maintained, that virtue is maintained. All humans, as proposed in *The Natural State of Medical Practice*, will inevitably engage in efforts to progress if not impeded and will usually do so by associating in groups with a common goal of self-betterment. Thus, self-interest is (1) a virtue assumed by natural law and (2) specified as a virtue by Objectivism, and its value is unrelated to individual accomplishment. It is, instead, related to not taking something from others without their consent, *i.e.*, adherence to natural law. The point is that self-interest and personal responsibility, both in Objectivism and in natural law theory of human progress, are consistent with natural law as a Judeo-Christian tenet.

For the virtue of "honesty," natural law views prevarication in all its forms as immoral, for by lying to another person we are denying him access to the truth of an issue and thereby interfering with his true understanding of it, and to varying degrees his welfare relies on knowing the truth of the matter. The Objectivist values honesty as adherence to the facts but does not view it as a social duty, instead considering it a negative reflection on the person doing the lying because the "real" message is changed into an "unreal" one and thereby reveals a sacrifice of one's reality, an Objectivist sin. Thus, in both natural law and Objectivism a moral defect lies with the person delivering a lie, although Objectivism carries the etiological blame for the lie further by damning its philosophical irreverence, whereas natural law considers philosophical justification unnecessary: it is bad just because it is something you would not want anyone to do to you.

7. Capitalism:

Both Objectivism and natural law theory of human progress fit comfortably with natural law regarding entrepreneurial capitalism. Natural law theory of human progress optimally functions in a laissez faire capitalist system, and its successes spread throughout a society and beyond and reinforce the importance of capitalism. Similarly, Objectivism recognizes capitalism as the only valid socioeconomic system. But in Objectivism capitalism finds its moral justification in serving the individual as it is the individual "capitalist" that benefits from the freedoms of entrepreneurial capitalism. Natural law theory of human progress also relies on the individual, but its engine usually is a group of individuals acting in concert in self-betterment, and thus it provides a mechanism that benefits each of the individuals in that group. But for both Objectivism and natural law theory of human progress the whole idea of an entrepreneurial capitalist system is to

¹⁴ There is moderation on this point, however, for physical or mental disability and immaturity are circumstances that in a humane world require assistance, and proffered assistance would be desirable and virtuous.

more efficiently provide something sought by society at large. Thus, while looking after self-interest, they both are doing what is considered desirable for the community at large, or at least part of the community; they wouldn't be doing it if others in the community didn't want it and were not willing to pay for it. Objectivism is thereby willfully functioning for the common good despite Rand's pronouncement that the common good is "a useless concept." In fact, the greater the resulting common good, the greater would be recompense for services or products rendered. Rand, of course, was criticizing "common good" as a goal of such an effort, whereas both Objectivism and the natural law theory of human progress support it for its personal benefits, the latter merely being certain that the "common good" will appear.

The preceding paragraph, in describing the good for an entire society that might develop from an individual or group's self-betterment capitalistic effort that was unintended or even unimagined at its initiation might be considered an example of "spontaneous order." For a discussion of spontaneous order, see *The Natural State of Medical Practice*, volume 3, pp. 257-258.

The unique usefulness of natural law theory of human progress

Natural law theory of human progress, by defining those elements necessary for progress that have led to a doubling of life expectancy and a better and more secure life by adhering to natural law, decreases the need to apply a philosophical corrective for the distressing social environment that authoritarianism has caused in the first place. Much philosophical speculation regarding a better world might then be better used on other issues, rather than trying to square the ideal with the real.¹⁵ If the natural law theory of human progress is correct in representing the real world and the threat of centralized political authoritarianism, the more it is implemented the less will be the need for or interest in philosophies that blame our problems on other things, such as capitalism, religion, altruism, and lack of will. Freedom would have made those objections irrelevant.

At the present time, Objectivism can be viewed as a defensive philosophy in an authoritarian world. It is a response to authoritarianism and a moral corrective for the individual in an immoral authoritarian society. But the freer the society, the easier it is to adhere to natural law, and the less is the need for a corrective because infringement on individuals would be less common. Individuals will be freer to advance their own interests and thereby would be more restrained in their attempts to transgress the freedoms of others. There would be fewer injustices that require us to impose our own solutions to social problems we think have been created by others. The reason? There would be fewer social problems because everyone would be better off,

¹⁵ Wikipedia lists 416 named philosophies (admittedly some are technical), each one considered significant enough to justify a "search." And as an example of commonality of philosophical thinking, it has been stated that in India "every man is a philosopher." Surely this is so world-wide, from which we can conclude that upward of six billion philosophies exist, each one different and each one an expression of an individual assessment of one's proximate world. So why craft a particular philosophy in such a way that it appeals to a large audience? And if we are content with our personal philosophy why bother to inquire into others. The answer of course is that we suspect something is lacking in ours that we may find in the study of someone else's. It is the level of dissatisfaction with our own that triggers that search. Were we to be fairly content with our personal philosophy that we have evolved based on our life experiences, we would view the philosophy of others as merely of academic interest appropriate for a university faculty. It follows that, if everyone were fairly satisfied with his or her own views of life, whether or not able to fully implement them, philosophy as an academic study might become of historical interest only.

both physically (because of more prosperity) and psychologically (because of fewer threats). And the simple explanation is this: freedom from infringement on natural rights.

For Objectivism it is central to its philosophy that individuals do not transgress another's life. In natural law theory of human progress that principle is acknowledged to be ancient and cosmopolitan (including Judeo-Christian) and active today via the human conscience. But the natural law theory of human progress does more than identify the evils of transgression on others. It identifies the major source of our problem, which is not the individual. It is, instead, authoritarian governance as implemented by some individuals that transgresses natural rights. Natural law theory of human progress claims that when that authoritarianism is blocked freedom will lead to success of the entrepreneurial group and the community as a whole will prosper. Replace authoritarian governance and there will be little need for philosophy-derived correctives.

It is relevant to note that John Lewis, the prominent historian and Objectivist scholar, once pointed out in a lecture on Objectivism that its logical composition, like any well-developed philosophy, is complete and perfect, and that a single discrepancy in principle can bring down the entire structure.¹⁶ But the underlying mechanism of natural law theory of human progress is malleable and adjustable by degrees. A little bit of freedom is better than none and a lot of freedom is better than a little bit. There is no "all or none" involved. All that needs be said is that the greater the civil liberty, the better the outcome, at least for human progress as judged by medical practice. And if human progress continues to improve mankind's condition there will be less competition for life's graces, a more secure and content population will be more tolerant and will better manage the planet, and fewer philosophies will be needed to provide excuses for contentious ideas.

Furthermore, implementation of natural law theory of human progress would provide opportunity for any person in a society to work in his or her self-interest. In contrast, within a society the reach of Objectivism as a philosophy is restricted to the interested individual, and in most societies they will be uncommon. The natural law theory of human progress is universal in its relevance and accessibility.

Natural law theory of human progress is a function of a group, not an individual. It is the combination of varying talents that is the engine for its success in furthering human progress by harnessing the ideas of several persons who are working in concert for self-betterment. Objectivism on the other hand, as a personal philosophy, is not a mechanism for human progress. It is conducive to progress, and the inventions and constructions of its heroes in Rand's novels exemplify the useful offspring of their efforts. Nevertheless, simple mathematics will show that the varied ideas of the small group when compared to the single idea of a lone individual, is going to be more efficient in identifying, implementing and amplifying those ideas.

Lastly, the natural law theory of human progress and its association with Judeo-Christianity spans generations and even civilizations, whereas Objectivism has visited but two generations and will only make its presence felt in sympathetic societies. In other words, natural law theory of human progress is relevant in any age, whereas Objectivism is relevant only now. It requires a modern society with significant individual freedom that allows Objectivism to take advantage of what freedom has already produced. It has, nevertheless, an important role to be played in preventing the deterioration of modern society. Although it may argue that it has no intentions regarding the course of society, it should, because unless it does get involved it may end up in no

¹⁶ This was also stated in a 1985 lecture by Dr. Peikoff: "If anything is wrong anywhere, anybody who is interested in the truth should correct it. Does that mean that I concede that maybe there is an essential principle of Objectivism that is wrong? No, because by my understanding for the reason I just told you, it's one totality. So if any one principle is wrong, the whole thing is collapsed."

better position than pacifist Quakers, who, when the State is in complete control of society, will be among the first to be regulated into anonymity.

Conclusion

Objectivism and the natural law theory of human progress are, in most areas, consistent with natural law, its Judeo-Christian expression, and each other, the former operating through the individual and the latter through the group. Despite resistance to acknowledging the relevance of Judeo-Christianity, Objectivism performs in accordance with natural law and for this reason is a virtuous philosophy (see Excursus 4) despite lack of any religious motive. Furthermore, Objectivism does not restrict humaneness in any way. Both Objectivism and natural law theory of human progress favor self-betterment and freedom; the former demands it as a personal philosophy, and the latter describes its necessity for human progress. Moreover, the beneficent consequences of their self-interest can extend to include the common good even though unintended, and this also is a virtuous act even in the absence of motive. Although it is only the natural law theory of human progress that has been proven (in *The Natural State of Medical Practice*) to facilitate the initiation and maturation of human progress, the personal philosophy of Objectivism is capable of promoting and contributing to it. There would seem to be a natural association between the two if someone would but try. But the practical distinction between the two remains: Objectivism is an attractive and valuable personal philosophy, whereas natural law theory of human progress has (1) identified the nemesis that has made Objectivism broadly attractive and (2) exposes a cosmopolitan strategy to defeat it.

As a final comment, aspects of this excursus remind me of my childhood dentist in Ada, Ohio, who, while explaining the importance of preventive dentistry to his ten-year-old patient, acknowledged that his ultimate professional goal was to put himself out of business. Perhaps it is asking too much of Objectivists to join forces with Judeo-Christianity and the natural law theory of human progress in their battle.