

YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

It Usually Begins with Ayn Rand (LFB)

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Last accessed on Saturday July 23, 2016

22 Highlight(s) | 0 Note(s)

Yellow highlight | Location: 218

> For this reason unregulated capitalism is much more than just an efficient economic system to Rand and her followers. It is a moral absolute and the cornerstone of the Randian code of ethics which has its base not in mere voluntarism, but in selfishness in all areas of human activity. Understanding this, it becomes easier to see why the dollar sign is revered by the Randian with the same fervor Christians reserve for the cross, Jews for the star of David, Moslems for the crescent, and middle Americans for Old Glory.

Note:

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> Objectivism is an inflexible package deal. Ayn Rand, having established herself as a radical individualist, an uncompromising muckraker and free thinker by the 1950s, then proceeded to erect a tight system of logic embracing every conceivable area of human endeavor. Economics, politics, psychology, child-rearing, sex, literature, even cigarette-smoking—Rand had written about them all, issuing her pronouncements on each subject in turn. Curiously enough, for a woman who started out as a champion of the independent mind, she began to consider her own ideas as natural corollaries of truth and objectivity.

Note:

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> There was no one more radical than she in championing the autonomy and supremacy of the individual through the rhetoric of her novels. Philosophically, she was a wild and freaky anarchist, an iconoclast, a radical individualist. She created fictional heroes who challenged the authority of Corporate America, who fought the conformity of the American nation-state, who plotted against it and bombed its

institutions and brought it down with a resounding crash. This was the allure of Ayn Rand at the outset—her anarchism, her individualism, her revolutionary radicalism. Ayn Rand said to hell with conformity, to hell with sameness, to hell with Corporate America.

Note:

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And then, sadly, the seeds of rigidity implanted in her novels bore fruit. This champion of the individual man, of the beauty and variety of the unfettered mind, proceeded to erect her own house of cards. She developed her own system of compartmentalized logic, her own form of religion-substitute, which negated every principle she had established in the abstract such a short time before. Those who flocked to Objectivism for the breath of fresh air it promised in the midst of a choking miasma of political and cultural stagnation soon found themselves trapped in a different kind of intellectual strait jacket—all the more mystifying since it was unexpected.

Note:

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Disciples were permitted carnal bliss only if they were intellectually compatible and shared the same values, the same sense of life, the same moral code.

Note:

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Shortly afterward, it became known that Rothbard's wife, Joey, was a devout Protestant, a practicing Christian who actually believed that faith and altruism had a positive moral value. When the last tremors caused by this revelation finally faded away, a pall of silence fell over the living room. There was a Christian in the house. Not a renegade Christian who acknowledged the sins of her past and was ready to make amends for them. Not an apostate Christian who had forever forsaken the principles to which she formerly adhered. But a real, live, breathing Protestant who admitted belief in the existence of a Supreme Being! A heretic such as this was occupying the armchair in Ayn Rand's living room. And was married to one of Rand's most gifted protégés, no less, who now sat beside her with a look of villainous unconcern on his face.

Note:

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> Shortly afterward there was a meeting at which he found himself denounced for not smoking cigarettes. Cigarettes were pro-life and pro-man since they were manufactured by productive capitalists for human enjoyment; to be against tobacco on the grounds that it was destroying your lungs was to be against the creative efforts of industrialists who had gone through all their trouble for consumers who didn't appreciate what was being done for them. It was a paradigmatic case of ingratitude at the very least; an argument could even be made that it was immoral.

Note:

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> The first stated that the individual had the right to remain free from all outside intervention in his life so long as he conducted his affairs in a nonaggressive manner. This was libertarian philosophy, pure and simple. The second premise stated that the existence of atheistic communism was the single greatest evil mankind faced on earth, and that a powerful American nation-state was the only effective means of protecting our Western heritage from destruction by this insidious Red menace. This, of course, was the conservative anti-communist side to the Buckley mentality which was to become increasingly dominant throughout the balance of the fifties and the decade to follow.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 682

> He attempted to maintain this precarious balancing act between a call for unobtrusive government, and a strong nation-state with a large, powerful, and aggressive government existing only to combat the "Red disease" in the international arena, while maintaining at the same time a hands-off policy in domestic affairs. When he later realized that this concept was an impossible dream—primarily because a large military establishment depends heavily on a military draft and high taxation, profoundly anti-libertarian measures—he was forced to readjust his political formulation and speak of the "temporary suspension of individual liberties" until international communism could be defeated.

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> The remaining 6 percent were “radical traditionalists,” who might also be regarded as fervent American nationalists. The intellectual pillars of this faction were Buckley’s brother-in-law, L. Brent Bozell, a fanatical convert to Catholicism who later founded the Sons of Thunder, a neo-Carlist paramilitary organization whose members, wearing red berets and rosary beads, invaded hospitals to baptize aborted fetuses; Henry Paolucci, an ardent American nationalist; Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society; and explicitly anti-Semitic followers of Willis Carto, whose extremist right-wing combine came to include Liberty Lobby, the new American Mercury magazine, and another campus organization called the National Youth Alliance.

Note:

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> Ironically enough, the form of fanaticism adopted by the John Birch Society’s founder, Robert Welch, had led him in the middle 1960s to adopt certain positions which bore a strange similarity to those being espoused by the New Left. He was fond of referring to the United States government as “our main enemy,” and to the war in Vietnam as a “CIA plot” to destroy the military strength of the nation. The New Left had, of course, designated the United States as the “most imperialistic” country in the world, while denouncing the CIA—years before the Pentagon Papers—as the main instrument behind the assassination of Diem and the conduct of the war itself. One important difference in these two views is that Welch saw the CIA as having been taken over by “agents of Moscow,” while the New Left regarded it as a reflection of a deep-lying American sickness. Later in the 1960s, however, Welch began to join the traditionalist Buckleyite conservatives in their insistence on total victory in Vietnam.

Note:

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> The most consistent libertarians, admittedly a small minority, rejected at the outset the notion that America had a moral obligation to maintain a strong military presence abroad to contain the spread of international communism; while the hard-line traditionalists supported Buckley’s call for the temporary suspension of liberties at home until communism was defeated.

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> The “fusionist” school—as it was later referred to—found its spokesman in Frank S. Meyer, an ex-member of the Communist Party who had become an editor of National Review. Meyer maintained that it is possible both to keep our strong, militarized, outward-looking nation-state and to preserve fundamental individual freedoms in the domestic arena. Many libertarians, finding Buckley’s “temporary suspension” attitudes totally unpalatable, jumped for the philosophical life preserver Meyer had tossed out to them. Here was a way to eat their cake and have it simultaneously—to hang onto their libertarian rhetoric and keep their conservative credentials at the same time. Hess, Goldwater, and others somehow managed to gloss over the inconsistency of a small decentralized government that would be large enough to station nuclear-powered policemen in every potential hot spot in the world. The schizophrenia inherent in the very concept of “libertarian conservatism” was bound to erupt in a major conflict sooner or later. The chasm was simply too wide for anyone to straddle comfortably over an extended period. Hess, of course, threw off his anti-communism for total anarchism in 1968; Goldwater went the other way, forsaking much of his libertarianism for the traditionalism of Buckley, Nixon, and Agnew around the same time.

Note:

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> healthy development on the American political scene, he was apparently afraid we might succeed in toppling the federal government before Leftists could demolish the private-property system in the United States. Although we didn’t share Chomsky’s optimism about the imminent collapse

Note:

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> Under communism the economic, social, cultural, and spiritual life of the people (if acknowledged at all) is nationalized; all institutions belong to the state—theoretically to everyone, consequently to no one except those in command. Individual freedom is not recognized and, in fact, the entire concept of individual rights is regarded as counterrevolutionary and detrimental to the life of the state. Which, of course, it is. The individual, his goals, his aspirations, his freedoms, are crushed under the absolute authority of the communist state. Under a fascist dictatorship, a system of private ownership and private enterprise is sustained in name only. Actually the use of land, capital,

industrial and natural resources, and other forms of “private” ownership are so completely managed by the state—through its systems of licensing, granting of monopolistic franchises, import-and-export restrictions, and other types of regulatory laws—that the effect is the same as outright nationalization. The life of the people is rigid and narrowly defined. The individual, again, is crushed under the authority of the fascist state.

Note:

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society brought about through a libertarian coalition would be one in which those wedded to the Left, those wanting a collective lifestyle with communal property and equal distribution of goods and wealth, would be free to establish their own communities or communes on a voluntary basis; while those on the Right, preferring private ownership of land and goods and competitive exchange in an unmanipulated market place, would be equally free to create their own institutions and communities. The ideal is for both factions, and all in between, to co-exist peacefully in a libertarian order of voluntary association, to leave one another alone without any faction’s seeking to impose its way of life on another, hopefully to trade and communicate with one another, perhaps even to learn from one another and benefit from the experience of alternative lifestyles.

Note:

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Much of the squabbling over property rights that always plagues attempts at dialogue between the Left and Right has come about because of the failure of many on the Right, including libertarians, to make a clear distinction between legitimate private property and monopolistic corporate property established with the help of the state. There is a world of difference between the type of property and wealth held by General Dynamics and Lockheed, for example, and a homeowner in Queens or North Dakota. The first involves state-corporate theft, the latter nonaggressive homesteading. The property issue is crucial and worth clarifying.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 2,334

> The right to land, whether privately or collectively owned, presupposes that it is acquired honestly and without force and that it is used in such a way as not to damage the person or property of others. In the libertarian view, only people—either individually or communally through some form of voluntary arrangement—can legitimately hold title to parcels of real estate. Since government is based on varying degrees of force—democratically, the force of the majority over the minority; dictatorially, the force of a ruling clique or party over the vast majority—it cannot own land under a natural-law theory. While government claims to own land in the public interest, in reality it only holds land to serve the interests of the ruling class or certain groups favored for different reasons by the ruling class. And since land claimed and held through the coercion of the state involves the initiation of force by one group against another, even though it be by the majority against a small minority, government land as we have come to know it has no legitimate basis in a libertarian system. Government land, particularly federal land, can only exist so long as the people in power and those supporting them recognize it as a valid institution. Whenever a group in society begins to challenge the legitimacy of public property, the idea of government land held in the common interest of "all" is exposed as a myth.

Note:

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> Actually, the private versus communal property dialectic is an erroneous one; the real issue is one of morality—involving land acquisition, the use of land, and the way in which land titles are held.

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> Other titles which would be challenged in a libertarian society are large tracts of corporate property, much of which was seized from private citizens by the state and redeveloped for state-corporate interests; vast acreage in the Southwest and elsewhere, taken by force from the Chicanos and Indians who originally settled the land; former plantations in the South which should rightfully have passed on to the descendants of slaves who actually worked the land; enormous farms and ranches throughout the far and Middle West lying idle while their owners collect hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from the federal government. (Many of these multimillionaire country squires, collecting

their own subsidy from the government, are quick to denounce "parasites" on the welfare rolls.)

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Within the radical alliance, the people who stand the best chance of appealing to middle-class interests and keeping middle Americans actively involved in radical politics are the free-market libertarians. The radical Left, with all its hairy-chested bravado regarding violent revolution, with its denunciation of private property and general business activity, with its destructive sloganeering about "pigs" and "fascists" applied to anyone who prefers short hair and ties to jeans and medallions, can never expect to win the confidence of either the white- or blue-collar middle class. But libertarians—through their championship of the market place, of free enterprise, of the right to own private property; through their dedication to the ethic of individualism which is still very much a part of the American heritage, in fiction if not in actual practice—constitute the only organized group in the radical movement which could conceivably succeed in capturing the imagination of middle-class America. The great challenge that libertarians face in the remaining years of the 1970s is actually doing so.

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Visualize the magnificent spectacle of hundreds of thousands of taxpayers simply refusing to file each year on the grounds that doing so is: 1) a violation of the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution which protects the citizenry from unreasonable search and seizure; 2) a violation of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution which protects the individual from giving incriminating evidence against himself; 3) a violation of the Ninth Amendment to the Constitution which protects the individual from doing anything at all he doesn't believe in (according to that grand old anarchist, Lysander Spooner, if the Ninth Amendment were properly interpreted it would lead to the abolition of government itself); and 4) a violation of the Supreme Court decision regarding the so-called "Miranda warning," requiring government to inform each citizen of his Constitutional rights before acting against him. And if all this isn't enough, imagine taxpayers across the country quoting the first line of the Internal Revenue Service Code of Ethics—the part where it says that the income tax is based on the "voluntary

> compliance" of American citizens—and then notifying the government that they choose not to comply.

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