

Being Selfish, Being Happy
Tara Smith

Lecture 1: Rational Egoism

1. Introduction
2. Why Be Egoistic?
3. What Rational Egoism Is — Correcting Misconceptions
 - a. Self-Interest Is Not Transparent
 - b. Egoism Is Not Subjectivism
 - c. Egoism Is Not Materialism
 - d. Self-Interested Action Is Not Automatic
 - e. Pursuit of Self-interest Is Not Easy
 - f. Egoism Requires a Self
(and valuing is more than wanting)
 - g. Egoism Is Not Hedonism
 - h. Egoism Is Not Emotionalism
 - i. Egoism Is Not Predatory Exploitation
4. What Egoism Demands — Rational Virtues

Excerpt on the self from exchange between Peter and Dominique in *The Fountainhead*:

“What’s the real me?” she asked . . .

“What’s the real anyone?” he said, encouraged. “It’s not just the body. It’s . . . It’s the soul . . . It’s . . . you. The thing inside you.”

“The thing that thinks and values and makes decisions.”

“Yes! Yes, that’s it. And the things that feels . . .”

“So there are two things that one can’t give up: one’s thoughts and one’s desires?”

“Selfishness is a profoundly philosophical, *conceptual* achievement.”

(Ayn Rand, “Selfishness Without a Self,” *Philosophy: Who Needs It*)

The fundamental virtues: rationality, honesty, justice, integrity, independence, productiveness, pride

Lecture 2: Rational Happiness

1. Happiness — Some Pivotal Features:
 - a. Active
 - b. Self-generated
 - c. Higher-Order (inclusive)
2. Happiness — Its Essence and Its Objectivity
3. Two of Its Requisite Virtues:
 - A. Pride
 - B. Productiveness (Money, Greed)
4. What It Takes: Selfishness Without Apology

“Happiness is the successful state of life.”

“Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one’s values.” (“This Is John Galt Speaking”)

Ellis Wyatt on “Money as time,” *Atlas Shrugged*

“What’s wealth but the means of expanding one’s life? There’s two ways one can do it: either by producing more or by producing it faster. And that’s what I’m doing: manufacturing time. . . . I’m producing everything I need, I’m working to improve my methods, and every hour I save is an hour added to my life. It used to take me five hours to fill that tank. It now takes three. The two I saved are mine—as pricelessly mine as if I moved my grave two further hours away for every five I’ve got. It’s two hours released from one task, to be invested in another—two more hours in which to work, to grow, to move forward. That’s the saving account I’m hoarding.”
(*Atlas Shrugged*, 35th anniversary edition, pp. 721–22)

Recommendations for additional reading:

NB: This list is deliberately brief; many additional worthwhile resources are also available.

Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, 1961

Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, 1991

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 discuss “The Good,” “Virtue and “Happiness,” respectively

Tara Smith, *Ayn Rand’s Normative Ethics: The Virtuous Egoist*, 2006

Peter Schwartz, *In Defense of Selfishness*, 2015

Gregory Salmieri, “The Act of Valuing (and the Objectivity of Values),” *A Companion to Ayn Rand*, 2016

Gregory Salmieri, “Egoism and Altruism: Selfishness and Sacrifice,” *A Companion to Ayn Rand*, 2016