



Mexico

**Anna Maria Samoili**, Geniko Lyceum Filothei – “Christos Malevitsis”, Greece

**Ellie Kitinou**, Moraitis School, Greece

**Nicole Kouri**, Geniko Lyceum Filothei – “Christos Malevitsis”, Greece

*“Accept the fact that the achievement of your happiness is the only moral purpose of your life, and that happiness—not pain or mindless self-indulgence—is the proof of your moral integrity, since it is the proof and the result of your loyalty to the achievement of your values.”*

**Ayn Rand (1905–1982), Atlas Shrugged (1957), Random House, p. 1059.**

ANNA MARIA SAMOILI GENIKO LYCEUM FILOTHEI,GREECE

2.Through her philosophical works Ayn Rand presents a quite provocative thesis about ethics. Roughly speaking, her fundamental belief is that self interest when properly understood and handled is the epitome of morality while selflessness is likened to sacrifice which are both frowned upon. She believes that a moral person is the one committed on solely doing what is in their best self-interest and only by doing so one can reach the ultimate happiness. But what are we without love? Without friendship? Without all these values that depend and flourish on selflessness and make us the complex species we are? While examining Rand’s moral compass one might wonder: Where is her North, her South, her East and West? Where is her unknown?

Self-interest according to Rand also entails responsibility thus it is up to each one to determine their life. Furthermore, her advocating of classical liberalism connects tightly with her ethic of self-interest creating a capitalistic way of living. Self-interest is acceptable, according to Rand, when values such as integrity, independence, honesty, productivity, rationality and pride are integrated. Especially pride or in her own words “moral ambitiousness” which is the core of all virtues. All these values would consist one’s ammunition for the eternal battle to the pursue of happiness.

By advocating what in her books is “good” capitalism and free market she enables the gap between economical classes of society to constantly grow, thus hindering the expectant growth and progress. In this notion , in my opinion, lies Rand’s big mistake in the fundamental definition of morality which is solely materialistic ignoring the obvious complexity of human life.

“No man is an island” John Donne said drawing a parallel between humankind and a vast isolated landmass. By doing so he wanted to demonstrate how connected we all are. As Aristoteles said humans are social and political beings that depend on each other and thrive on love, friendship, solidarity and unity (despite the long bouts of greed and self destruction).That is where our constant and sincere need to build and be part of a society comes from. On the contrary, Rand’s theory allows cracks of egocentrism and selfishness

despite her clarification that happiness cannot be achieved through mindless self indulgence. In Ancient Greece her “precious” virtue would be considered as hubris against Gods, since the idea that one could obtain happiness for oneself was a twisted-kind of pride that was to be met with harsh punishment, the nemesis.

Her aggressive individualism undermines the merit of obligation, duty and selflessness all of which are integral virtues for creating social values. One could even venture and say that her individualistic stance acts as fungus that eats away the bonds of humanity driving people away, in the long term. Happiness can be achieved through selflessness. A mother’s sacrifice for her child’s well-being does not make a happy mother rather a deeply morally satisfied mother knowing that she did everything that she could to save her child. The maternal instinct is the “mother” of all human instincts that every woman develops when they hold their baby for the first time and realize they would go to great lengths to protect it.

As Socrates said to reach happiness one must focus on the soul and not in the body and by harmonizing one’s desires to soothe the mind one can reach a divine like state of serenity. From the age of Socrates a question has aroused “what is happiness and how it can be achieved” many philosophers have tried to answer it, one of them being Rand, but to my mind plenty have failed. That is because they do not understand the fundamental definition of happiness which can not be described as one word or one notion. In this case Rand fails to understand that happiness is not a good you can bid on. Because happiness is rather a state of mind when as Socrates said there is health in the body and justice in the soul. In Greek happiness is “eutychia” which is a compound word consisting of the prefix “eu” which means good and the noun “tykhe” which means luck. The etymology of the word is when the universe aligns in favor of you and all circumstances are favorable. But I believe that happiness should not be considered as something so complicated, elusive and unattainable.. We should learn to derive it from simple everyday things because happiness can be as simple as a “flower worn on the ear” as my country’s renowned writer Kazantzakis wrote.

Each one has a different view of happiness and similarly walks on a distinct path to reach it. Likewise Rand’s compass for her path is directed by integrity, self-interest, rationality and lastly pride. Mine is directed by love, friendship, empathy and honesty.