

## A Critique of Objectivist Metaethics

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Objectivism, the philosophy of Ayn Rand, has had a considerable amount of popular influence, although much less academically. As part of an effort to gain recognition and support for their philosophy, and to provide it with a secure foundation, Objectivists are writing academic books. One such book is *Viable Values: A Study of Life as the Root and Reward of Morality*, by Tara Smith, which is an extended, rigorous attempt to defend the Objectivist position, and to provide for a purely rational and secular ethics.<sup>1</sup>

Smith (2000) begins her book by arguing that there is an ethical crisis today. She writes: “The person of upstanding moral character seems an endangered species” (1). She then asks how this lamentable situation has come about—and her answer is quite simple. People, she says, have not been given any good reason to be moral, since the popular contemporary ethical theories fail (2). And it is this situation that she sets out to rectify.

To this end, Smith spends the first part of her work reviewing and critiquing contemporary philosophical ethics. And, for the most part, I think she does a creditable job in doing so. She critiques such theories as Intuitionism, Contractarianism, and Rationalism (13–60). However, she barely mentions several other important ethical theories; theistic ethics is dismissed in one sentence, while Utilitarianism and Kantianism are both rejected in only half a sentence (2).

Smith then rebuts the notion of “intrinsic value”—that there are values in the world that are “just there,” apart from the existence and valuing of any valuer (61–82). This is crucial to her argument that the ultimate source of ethical standards is the valuing by persons.

Having finished her critique, she then moves on to her positive

purpose: the establishment of the Objectivist version of ethical egoism. Like Rand, Smith argues: "The requirements of human life furnish the standard of value for human beings and, derivatively, the basis for all moral prescriptions. Life is the yardstick by which we measure whether a thing is good or bad and whether an action is right or wrong" (83).

Thus, according to Smith, life is primary in Objectivism's ethical theory. What she means by the concept of life is survival or physical longevity. She writes: "Life is a series of actions. More specifically, it is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated actions. All living organisms—from paramecia and mushrooms through salmon and hawks to bears and humans—initiate certain actions to maintain their existence." Further, "Life is an ongoing either/or; it can continue or cease, and its continuation imposes requirements. Life is contingent on certain needs being satisfied" (87). From this, it can readily be seen that what Smith means by life is the continued existence of a self-sustaining entity—an entity that keeps itself in existence by acting in certain ways. Another way of stating this is that life is physical survival or longevity. Thus, according to Smith, for any living thing, the attempt to continue to exist as a living thing is what gives rise to values.

Smith argues that ethics is therefore a concept generated by the needs of a living rational organism. Only living organisms that face the alternative of life and death can have values. To this end, Smith argues that an immortal being could not have any values. She elucidates an argument by Rand about an indestructible robot. Since its continued existence is guaranteed, Rand and Smith argue, it can have nothing to work for and thus can have no values (87–88).

In my view, this argument is inescapably flawed. Let us consider the concept of an indestructible robot. Of course, the concept of a robot is problematic when it comes to the question of values. For the robots of our experience are non-sentient and do not consciously value anything. Charles King, in his critique of Objectivist ethics, changes the robot to an immortal and indestructible human being (King 1984, 109).<sup>2</sup> The concept of the robot may be used, however, as long as it is remembered that the robot is considered to be

conscious—i.e., that it thinks, wills, and feels, much like a human being. I will call the robot Data.

Why does Smith think that Data could not have any values? Her first point is that Data would not have to worry about time, because, being immortal, no matter what happened to him, he would have nothing to lose. Since for such a being there would always be a tomorrow, there would always be future opportunity to do things, and thus no particular activity on any particular day would have any significance (Smith 2000, 88).

Smith further argues that a being such as Data could not become sick. Sickness is by definition a "physiological malfunction" (88), and as such, can eventually result in the destruction of the being that is suffering the malfunction. But again, by definition, an indestructible being such as Data cannot be destroyed, and therefore cannot become ill.

Both of these arguments are unsound. In the first case, it seems obvious that even an immortal being could miss opportunities that would not come again. For example, even if Data were immortal and indestructible, the people around him are not. If Data were to make certain choices, he would not meet people who, because of their mortality, he would never have the chance to meet again.

Suppose, also, that one choice that Data can make will leave him in a miserable situation forever. William Craig (1994, 59–60) writes of a science fiction story where an astronaut becomes immortal, but is forever trapped on an asteroid where there are no other persons, or indeed anything else of interest. He must remain there for eternity alone, with nothing to do. If Data were in that situation, and he had a choice to either stay on the asteroid or leave for some other place where a much richer life may be lived, it can easily be seen that the choice Data—whom I've defined as a thinking, willing, feeling individual—makes would have great import for him.

The problem of illness fares no better. First, it does not seem obvious that all illness must lead to death. Why could not Data have a disease, which would leave him paralyzed? He would still exist immortally, but be unable to move. Would it not be in Data's interest to avoid such a disease? But the most important point here is not

disease or injury, but pain. There seems to be nothing conceptually impossible about a being—with no physiological malfunction—feeling pain. One can conceive, for example, of Data having headaches every time he comes within ten feet of a television set, although with no damage to his body. Why could not Data have been constructed by a mad scientist who, for reasons of his own, did not want Data to watch TV and therefore built him so that he would feel pain when in proximity to a TV set? If this is logically possible, i.e., non-contradictory, and it is clear to me that it is, then Data would have values, e.g., staying away from TV sets, in spite of being immortal.

If my arguments are sound, then Data, in spite of his indestructibility, does have values, i.e., the avoidance of pain and unhappy situations. But then it is conceptually possible to have values even though one is immortal, and Smith's argument that mortality is a necessary presupposition for the possession of values is shown to be false.

This brings up a related objection. Besides wanting to avoid unpleasant situations, why could not Data feel pleasures that have nothing to do with mortality? King (1984, 111) brings up the pleasures of golf—or if not golf, bowling, soap opera watching or even reading philosophy. In short, there seem to be pleasures that people (or robots like Data) have or could have that have nothing to do with furthering one's life, or in the case of things like smoking, pose a hazard to one's life. Why could not Data seek after these pleasures, simply because they are pleasures?

Smith (2000, 89) makes the following objections to this line of reasoning:

[T]he possibility of pleasure depends upon our mortality. We could not find certain things pleasurable if we did not face the alternative of life or death. Survival needs are the source of organisms' pleasure-pain mechanism. . . . Consequently, if we stripped away the possibility of death, we would be eliminating the very thing that makes pleasure and pain possible. Thus, we cannot suppose that an immortal

being would continue to experience pleasure or pain.

The argument is unsound. For even if it is the case that the survival needs are the source of organisms' pleasure and pain mechanisms, this does not entail that the only time that one can feel pain or pleasure is when one is trying to "further" one's life. One feels pain and pleasure because one is possessed of a particular kind of physiological mechanism and is in a certain kind of situation. Were a human being somehow to become immortal, why would this mean that his or her pleasure and pain mechanism would automatically cease to function? As long as the necessary physiology is still in place, I see no reason to think that the immortal would not still feel pleasure. Smith is confusing the source of the pleasure/pain mechanism with its functionality. That is, she is confusing the questions as to why a being has such a mechanism to begin with and why the mechanism functions.

For Smith, life is the ultimate value. An ultimate value may be defined as a value that is superior to all of the rest, in the sense that if one were forced to choose, one would choose that value over any other. Smith consistently ties value to life. For Smith, as for Rand, life must be the ultimate value, the value to which all other values necessarily lead. But the question is, why can only life be the ultimate value? Why, for example, could not one's ultimate value be bowling a 300 game, to which one directs all of one's efforts? Of course, one would need to be alive in order to do this, but all that this means is that life is a necessary precondition for the bowling of a 300 game.

To clarify her argument, Smith defines the difference between a goal and a standard. A goal is something one aims at. She writes: "A person's goal is his own life. In order to achieve that, he must abide by the requirements imposed by his nature as a human being. Thus, the standard of value refers to the requirements of human life. This standard allows a person to measure the progress in advancing his goal" (94). There is thus for Smith a distinction between goals and standards. The goal is physical longevity. To reiterate what was argued above, by life Smith means physical survival: "Needs rest on the alternative of life or death . . . It is only because we face the threat

of death that we have needs. Needs boil down to existence needs" (89-90). If life is defined as the alternative to death, then it must be thought of as physical survival or longevity.

By contrast, a standard is something that measures. Smith writes: "What emerges from values' roots in life is that life is the goal and sets the proper standard of value. The requirements of human life furnish the yardstick by which to make moral evaluation" (93). So, for Smith, the goal and ultimate value is the person's life, which is physical longevity, while the standard is the attainment of the requirements necessary to sustain human life, such as food, shelter, etc. Having clarified her terms, Smith writes:

At the same time, we must recognize that life is the only possible standard of value. Not any purpose that a person adopts can substitute as this standard. The fact that life makes value possible means that no alternative ends warrant the status of value, . . . Life assumes this central role because life or death is the fundamental alternative that a person faces, demanding that a person achieve ends that sustain his life. No alternative end could replace life as the source of value because no alternative end could be achieved by means that do not respect life's requirements. (95)

In this passage, Smith gives three related arguments. They are:

(1) Life alone can be the standard of value, because the fact that life makes value possible means that there is no alternative end(s) that warrant the status of value.

(2) Life has the central role as the only possible standard of value because life and death are the fundamental alternatives that one faces, demanding that one achieve ends that sustain one's life.

(3) No other end than life could be the source of value, because no alternative end could be achieved by means that do not depend upon the requirements necessary to sustain life.

It should be noted that in the one short paragraph from which these arguments are drawn, Smith argues that life is simultaneously the standard of value, the only end that warrants the status of value,

that along with death, life is one of the two fundamental alternatives that people face (which somehow demands that a person achieve ends that sustain life), and the only end that can be the source of value. This is confusing, and indeed, it can be seen that all three of these arguments are unsound. I will examine them one at a time.

Smith's argument (1) asserts that because life makes value possible, life alone can be the standard of value. First, given what she wrote about the difference between a goal and a standard of value, shouldn't she say here that the requirements of life, not life itself, are the standard of value? The only way I can make sense of this is to say that what Smith means is that only life can be one's ultimate goal, end or ultimate value. But if we re-write Smith's argument this way, then why should one have life rather than something else as one's ultimate goal or value? How does the fact that life is a necessary precondition for most other values automatically make it into everyone's ultimate goal or value? Rather, life is valuable only because without being alive one could not enjoy other values.

Second, if contrary to the above, we interpret Smith as saying that life is the standard of value, why does the fact that life makes value possible mean that it alone must be the standard of value? The argument would have to be, X makes Y possible, therefore X is the standard for Y. This is obviously false. Gasoline makes it possible for a car to run. But it is not the case that gasoline is the only standard by which we judge cars.

Argument (2) fares no better. Here, Smith argues that life must be the ultimate value for people because life or death is the fundamental alternative that people face. This argument is a complete non sequitur.

Why does the fact (if it is a fact) that life and death—physical longevity versus extinction—are the fundamental alternatives people face mean that staying alive is the ultimate value that one *must* choose? Where is the necessity? Again, the fundamentality of life or death as one's basic choice only means that life is a precondition for most of the goals one might choose, including one's ultimate goal.

If, for example, I make bowling my ultimate, and indeed my only value, I will prize life for the obvious reason that if I'm not alive I

can't go bowling. If, for some reason, I find that I can never bowl again, and I don't choose another value, life will have no purpose for me. We choose to live mainly because we value other things.

It is true that, in some sense, the opposite of life is death. Given this, it is easy to think that if one does not make life one's ultimate end, then one is making death the ultimate end. But this is fallacious. If one does not make life one's ultimate value, it is not the case that death is the only alternative; rather, anything else besides life may be one's ultimate goal.

Argument (3) also fails. For one thing, it fails because, although it is true that, for an individual, most values depend upon life and the values necessary to sustain life for their fulfillment, this is not always the case. Occasionally, the fulfillment of values for some individuals depends upon their own deaths. For example, many people have willingly given up their lives to save their country, family or friends. Those who have done so have not held their own lives as their ultimate value. In choosing to die, they have not abandoned all values. In such cases, the ultimate value is not attained by life and the requirements necessary to sustain it, but by death and what is necessary for death.

Another fallacy is at work here. There is a conceptual distinction between a fundamental value and an ultimate value. To be a fundamental value in Smith's sense is to be a value necessary to the realization of other values. To be an ultimate value is to be the final goal or end value. These are two very different concepts. There is no reason why a person's own life must be his ultimate goal. Logically, it can be anything else.

In fact, notwithstanding all the argumentation above, Smith agrees that it is not necessary to choose life. It is a fundamental part of Smith's theory that one's choice to live is just that—a choice. It is logically prior to morals, and, therefore, it is non-moral, and also non-rational. She writes:

[T]he choice to live is not subject to rational appraisal. It arises in a context devoid of the values that provide the standard for determining what a person should do. In this

sense, the choice to live is primary. It is not justified by any prior ends. . . . We cannot say that a person ought, rationally, to choose to live because we have no preexisting standards to underwrite the "ought." (107)

Thus, Smith holds that "the choice to live is prerational" (107). In Kantian terminology, Smith thus has a hypothetical imperative, but not a categorical one. What this entails, in Smith's theory, is that the person who does not choose to live is outside ethics. He is not bound by morality. Only those that choose to live can be ethical. This has some rather distressing implications. To wit, no action by anyone who does not choose to live is either moral or immoral.

Let me give an example by telling the following strange story. Suppose that there is a boy, seventeen years old, who, after having broken up with his girlfriend decides that life is not worth living, and so resolves to kill himself. Somehow—and this is the strange part of the story—he manages to get hold of an atomic bomb. To go out with a bang, both figuratively and literally, he decides to blow himself up in the middle of large city. This will kill a million people, injure another million, and destroy or damage the property of several million. It will also kill and hurt many different animals, while destroying many works of art and architecture, as well as the physical plant for numerous sectors of the economy. Let us also add that no one in the city has ever done the boy any harm while several people have done him good.

Intuitively, this would seem to be an extremely evil act. Yet, on Smith's theory, since the boy decided not to live, it was not immoral for him to do what I have described, or anything else for that matter. For Smith, and for Objectivism, since the choice to live is logically prior to ethics, anyone who does not make the choice is not beyond, but "prior to good and evil." And this seems just wrong, indeed, for in the case of the boy and the bomb, the obviousness of the evil is far stronger than any argument that Smith has for the truth of her theory.

Smith would, I think, reject that this is the implication of her theory. She argues that "the fact that a given person rejects his life does not alter the moral position of others. . . . It is not the case that

if some people reject life, they thereby acquire 'permission' to treat others however they like" (110). This may be true, but it hardly seems to be the case that people who choose to die need to ask permission to act immorally (according to the Objectivist theory of morality). As I have shown, Smith's argument is that only by choosing to live does one enter into morality. If people choose to die, they are not governed by morality. Thus, nothing they do is immoral.

Smith may argue that both she and Rand believe in individual rights. Based on this, she may say that just because one has chosen to die, this does not give one the right to take others along with one. But the Objectivist theory of rights depends upon the Objectivist ethics. If, as I argue, the Objectivist ethics fail, the Objectivist theory of rights is also undermined. Smith may be asked why one should respect other people's rights; she might answer that it is unethical not to do so. But if, as she states, anyone who does not choose to live thereby "opts out" of ethics, then ethical matters become irrelevant. Thus, a person who decides not to live need not be concerned with ethics, and therefore need not worry about other people's rights.

Indeed, Smith's theory seems to lead to all sorts of counter-intuitive results. As is the case with egoistic theories in general, ethics is reduced to prudence: what is best for me in the long run? Now, it is true that prudence is a virtue; indeed, it is an important one. But all ethics cannot be reduced to it. In Smith's theory, values are ethically held if and only if they somehow contribute to one's longevity. For if longevity really were the source of all values, then logically, every other value is subordinate to life. Given a situation where one is forced to choose between life and any other value, it is, on Smith's theory, a necessity, that if one chooses to remain within morality, that the other value must be given up.

To illustrate: Smith states that "[s]ince action in the face of danger is often necessary to protect those things that nourish a person's life, courage would be a virtue in a life-directed ethical code. . . . Cowardice does not sustain a person's life" (96). To which it may be responded: Sometimes cowardice does not sustain a person's life. And sometimes cowardice (or "rational cowardice") is precisely what

would sustain a person's life. To use Smith's example, if a child one dearly loves is drowning, and the mother is too cowardly to try to save the child, she could indeed suffer. Given a situation where there is only a 1% chance of drowning herself if she tries to rescue the child, it may indeed be the most life-enhancing thing for her to rescue the child. For if she did nothing and the child drowned, she may become so depressed and remorseful that she might turn to drink or drugs, and hence shorten her life.

But what if the odds of drowning were 20%? Or 40%? Or 50%, or even higher? At some point, the odds of the mother dying attempting to save the child are greater than the odds of her shortening her own life by doing nothing. And, on Objectivist ethics, it would seem that whatever those odds are, at that point it would be immoral to try and save the child.

Rand (1964, 45–46) herself wrote: "If the person to be saved is not a stranger, then the risk one should be willing to take is greater in proportion to the greatness of that person's value to oneself. If it is the man or woman one loves, then one can be willing to give one's own life to save him or her—for the selfish reason that life without the loved person could be unbearable." In this instance, Rand holds that something other than mere physical longevity is her ultimate value. Only a "bearable" life is worth living. Subjectivism thus enters again: One's decision to live depends upon one's evaluation of how happy one's life will be. Happiness, or at least "the bearable," rather than life per se, becomes the ultimate value. What Rand is saying here is that only if the loss of the loved one will make one's own life unbearable may one ethically decide to give up, or perhaps seriously endanger, one's own life. But in truth, very few people value another person so much that their life will become unbearable if the other person dies. The vast majority of the time, people get over their loss, and go on to someone else. Cases such as Rand describes, where a person sacrifices his or her own life for another—because the other person's death would make their own life unbearable—would be rare. In other cases, it would be, on Objectivist grounds, immoral to try to save the other person's life at serious risk to one's own.

It may be granted that at some point if the odds of dying oneself

are so high, it would be right to not attempt a rescue. If the odds were 95% or more that one would die without saving the child, many people might consider it right to not try to save the child (though I suspect that many parents would try anyway). But it would seem that the odds would be much lower on Smith's theory, and in any case, the primary consideration for her and other Objectivists is the effect that it will have on one's own life.

Let me change the story a little. Let us suppose that if the mother does nothing, the child will certainly drown and this will cause a 10% chance that the mother's life will be shortened significantly. But if she attempts to rescue the child, there is a 100% chance that the child will be saved and a 12% chance that she will drown. On Objectivist grounds, it would seem that the moral thing for a person to be is a rational coward, and do nothing. In effect, the mother should say "I would like to rescue you, child of mine, since your existence helps my life flourish, and I'll miss you when you're gone. But, after all, being an Objectivist, I know that the only possible ultimate value for me is my own life. You have value only so far as you contribute to it. And, anything that decreases the odds of my surviving is immoral for me. So, after calculating the odds, I have found that the right thing to do is nothing." Of course, I am not saying that this is what Smith advocates. I am simply saying that the above scenario follows logically from her principles.

I will admit that the examples I have given do not by themselves disprove Objectivist ethics. They do not show contradictions in egoism understood in terms of physical longevity. What they do is show that extremely counter-intuitive results follow from the acceptance of Rand's and Smith's theory of ethical egoism. They also show that the theory does not always promote values that Objectivists themselves claim to admire. And certainly, whatever else they may be, such values are not heroic.

There is one response to this which Smith tries to make. This is to combine the concepts of life and flourishing. Up until this point, Smith has written about life as being physical longevity—or, at least by the way she used her terms, she could only have meant physical longevity. Indeed, if one will check her index, one will see that

flourishing is mentioned on pages 3 and 7, but not again until page 125, where chapter five begins and flourishing is examined in detail. Here, she argues that life is both longevity and flourishing, and that these two concepts are inextricably tied to each other:

My thesis here is that the end of value and the reward of living morally is individual flourishing. Colloquially, people commonly distinguish flourishing from survival, with "survival" referring to subsistence with the barest necessities and "flourishing" referring to a much higher level of comfort and enjoyment. In fact, this distinction is misleading. Life, as the source and aim of ethics, *is* flourishing. These are not two-alternative goals only one of which a person might adopt. . . . But a flourishing life is the target and foundation of value. (125)

In some sense, Smith is surely correct. Few people want merely to survive; they want to flourish, with all that this entails. Indeed, this is the point of one of my criticisms: that mere survival without some sort of flourishing is not what most people would choose as their ultimate aim. The question is, however, whether Smith is entitled to this position on the basis of the theory she has presented. Flourishing and survival are conceptually distinct. One cannot flourish unless one survives, but one may survive without flourishing. It is quite possible to live a very long but miserable life. One may conceive of a man locked in a dungeon who has the minimal requirements to keep him alive, but little else. The man could live to be 100, unhappy though he is.

On the basis of the arguments that Smith has presented thus far, life is a value insofar as it is fundamental to all other values. That is why she holds that it is necessarily the fundamental value. But flourishing is not a fundamental value conceptually necessary to make all other values possible. Rather, other values are what make up the concept of flourishing. This distinction is a major problem for Smith's theory.

If life as physical longevity or survival is necessarily the ultimate

value, as Smith has argued, then it necessarily takes precedence over every other value. But Smith also holds to voluntarism with regard to morality. For her, the choice to be moral is a non-rational, non-moral choice. If a man chooses not to live, his choice is non-moral. But if he chooses to live because he knows that if he survives he will flourish, then he is making something else besides life qua life as his ultimate value. Flourishing, whatever that means to him (bowling every night, for example), is thus the ultimate value and life as survival merely an instrumental value. Thus, in contradiction to what Smith has argued, life as survival or longevity is not the ultimate value. However, if a man chooses to survive even though he knows that he will not flourish, then life-qua-survival is different from life-qua-flourishing, and this is contrary to Smith's view of their inextricable tie.

Smith may try to escape from this dilemma by arguing that only those who attempt to flourish will survive. This may be true in general, but it is not a universal truth. As I've suggested, one can easily conceive of someone living with the bare minimum to survive, but nonetheless surviving for quite a long time. One may freely admit not that flourishing and survival generally go together. But if they are not always co-extensive, then one need not flourish to survive. If, as Smith has argued earlier, life as survival is the only possible ultimate aim, then to be moral on Objectivist grounds is to choose to survive even if one cannot flourish. That most people would not choose a long miserable life over a slightly shorter but very happy life demonstrates that life as mere survival is not the real ultimate goal.

Smith has one last card to play. This is the notion that if one's ultimate goal(s) is flourishing, or survival or both, it is always in one's self-interest to act in a manner that most would consider ethical. That is, it is always best to be honest, for example. Smith writes:

The principle of honesty, however, serves as a reminder that deception cannot succeed. . . . Dishonesty is impractical because misrepresenting reality does not transform reality. . . . In fact, dishonesty only worsens one's situation in at

least a few significant respects. (166)

To back up this claim, Smith tells a couple of stories about people who choose to act in a dishonest or dishonorable manner, showing how by doing so they end up hurting themselves. She believes that the egoist should always act according to the principles that Objectivism advocates, which include complete honesty, integrity and the upholding of other people's rights, because by not doing so one will inevitably hurt oneself in the long run.

I wish that this were true. In the vast majority of cases, acting according to the principles mentioned above, which most would consider ethical, will advance one's interests, while deviating from these will cause loss. Again, however, the problem is not with what is true usually or in general, but with the universality. And again, it seems easy to come up with cases where doing the wrong thing ethically can advance one's life, either as survival or as flourishing.

Take, for example, a man who lives a miserable life as a book-keeper, with a nagging wife and four screaming kids. For various reasons, he cannot get a better job (he's not that talented), and cannot leave his marriage (the alimony and child support would impoverish him). But, along comes an opportunity to embezzle one hundred million dollars from his employer, and skip to Rio with Suzy, the young and extremely good-looking company receptionist. Let me also add that exchanging his unhappy life for a happy one would probably increase his life span. The scheme is as foolproof as anything in this world is, with the odds of being caught about ten million to one. Why should he not do it?

Granted, of course, he may have some guilty feelings. But he certainly would have enough money for a therapist. And, in any case, his life would be better than it is now. If one were an egoist, would not the ethical thing to do be to embezzle? Any guilt feelings one might have would be irrational. Cases like this are few and far between, but nonetheless they do exist. And it seems very difficult on purely secular egoistic grounds to say why the man should not go forward with his nefarious scheme. Only if there is an afterlife could it be possible that virtue is always rewarded and vice punished. But

Objectivists rule out any possibility of an afterlife.

In conclusion, I have argued that Smith's theory fails on multiple grounds. Assuming that Smith's theory is a faithful defense of Objectivist ethics, Objectivist ethics fails. Because it does, no one ought to accept Objectivist ethics.

## Notes

1. The book was reviewed in this journal by Lester Hunt (2000). For Rand's original essay on the Objectivist ethics, see Rand 1964, 13–35.

2. King's is an important critique of Objectivist ethics, as is John Robbins' chapter on Objectivist ethics. See Robbins 1997, 144–79. Surprisingly, Smith ignores both of these authors, as well as other critics of Objectivism.

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