

Objectivism “on one foot”

At a sales conference at Random House, preceding the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*, one of the book salesmen asked me whether I could present the essence of my philosophy while standing on one foot. I did, as follows:

1. *Metaphysics*: Objective Reality

2. *Epistemology*: Reason

3. *Ethics*: Self-interest

4. *Politics*: Capitalism

If you want this translated into simple language, it would read: 1. "Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed" or "Wishing won't make it so." 2. "You can't eat your cake and have it, too." 3. "Man is an end in himself." 4. "Give me liberty or give me death."

If you held these concepts with total consistency, as the base of your convictions, you would have a full philosophical system to guide the course of your life. But to hold them with total consistency—to understand, to define, to prove and to apply them—requires volumes of thought. Which is why philosophy cannot be discussed while standing on one foot—nor while standing on two feet on both sides of every fence. This last is the predominant philosophical position today, particularly in the field of politics.

In the space of a column, I can give only the briefest summary of my position, as a frame-of-reference for all my future columns.