

Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

July 2023

The Power of Human Fecundity

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Back in September of 2022, I recorded a *BBC World News America* report that included a segment about the floods in Pakistan. I made a video clip of the Pakistan segment and then, apparently, forgot about it. Early in June of this year, I

found it misfiled in one of my archive folders. I don't remember putting it there. It was an accident that I found it at all. I was working on a completely different project at the time. Anyway, since I had the video clip again, I wrote this little article and then sent the video clip to the website. Here's the address.

http://frontiersman.org.uk/Videos/Videos.html#Pakistan_Floods

The report focused on the plight of displaced mothers and their hungry children. Most of the women reportedly had as many as 6 or 8 children each. To quote the report, there were "scores" more pregnant women on the scene. As usual, nobody was asking the right questions. For example, in a country where 20% of

the population is undernourished and nearly 45% of children under 5 are stunted, why are so many women having so many children? Aren't things bad enough already, without unnecessarily adding more mouths to feed?

Never underestimate the power of human stupidity or, so it seems, the power of human fecundity.

I have often speculated — I won't dignify the conceit with the status of a theory — that the structural logic of a brain is of rather more consequence than we reckon with. Our own brains are remarkable for their utter lack of rational structure. Considering the haphazard manner in which our thoughts are formed, registered, indexed and recalled, any single rational act becomes a miracle. —Claghorn of the Overheles

speaking in *The Last Castle*, Chapter VIII
by Jack Vance

Eat, sleep, defecate, procreate. That's all they [*the insects*] do. That's all we do, but at least insects don't kid themselves that it's anything more than that. —Dr. Bambi Barenbaum, speaking in

War of the Coprophages, Season 3, Episode 12
The X-Files

Mud Cookies

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Several months ago, I saw a report about some women in Haiti. If I recall correctly, it was on *BBC World News America*. Maybe it was on *DW News*. I don't remember for sure.

The women didn't have anything to use for fuel, so they were cooking on a flat rock, exposed to sunshine. They didn't have any food, so they were scooping mud into a bowl, from a mud puddle. They added a small amount of salt and sugar, formed the mud into thin patties, and cooked them on the rock. They called

them mud cookies. One of the women commented that having something in your stomach helps to reduce the pain of being hungry. I'm not inventing this. It was actually reported as a true story.

Sometimes when I'm sitting here watching the news and eating a sandwich, I think about those women. They were eating mud cookies. Think about it. Mud cookies.

Current World Population

<https://www.census.gov/popclock/world>

Population Curve

<http://frontiersman.org.uk/Population/Curve.html>

Letter to the Editor

Dear Frontiersman

More than a year ago, I offered my personal summary of Ayn Rand's "Objectivist" philosophy [April 2022, page 3]. Now, I would like to explain why I do not classify myself as an "Objectivist", despite the fact that I regard Rand as a brilliant author, whose works I have read with great enjoyment.

Disclaimer: The criticisms I will relate are not entirely my own inventions. I have read many books and articles that deal with Rand's

ideas. The two books that have been my most important influences are: *With Clarity Toward None: An Analysis of Ayn Rand's Philosophy*, by William O'Neill, and another book whose author I do not remember, and with a title I recall as *Reconsidering Rand*. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find this book online. My apologies to the author.

Rand claimed that her ideas were entirely factual and entirely logical, but these are false claims.

First, the factual errors: →

Rand claimed that people had no survival instincts. She claimed that reason was humanity's only mental tool of survival. She defined reason in this way: "Reason is the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by the senses." She claimed that mentally normal people have complete free will in regard to the use or non-use of reason. She claimed that all emotions are triggered by reasoned judgments. Rand often said: "Emotions are not tools of cognition."

Her model of the mind has been discredited by research in the relevant fields of neurology, psychology, and child development. It is true that humans are not born with survival instincts in the way that amoebas or other microscopic animals have them. We are not born knowing how to survive or reproduce. However, we are born with a multitude of automatic responses to varying types of incoming sensory data. Survival would be virtually impossible without these "instincts". Most importantly, the preponderance of evidence suggests that our most basic feelings of happiness are triggered by experiences of physical pleasure.

Without such automatic responses to the outside world, reason could make no evaluations of positivity or negativity.

Research has determined that much of what Rand calls reason happens on a subconscious level. Therefore, it's false to claim that people have complete free-will in regard to the use of reason. It's also been shown that strong emotions distort reason, so that reason is not entirely objective.

More scientific information on the mind can be found in: *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* by Malcolm Gladwell, and in many books by Oliver Sacks, such as *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, and *An Anthropologist on Mars*.

Ayn Rand also made logical errors. Rand claimed that each person should regard his or her own life as their supreme good. She said that this was logically necessary, because without life, no value could be experienced. It's true that one must exist to do anything, but that does not force anyone to regard the continuation of life as a positive value. Each year, millions of rational people freely choose to commit suicide. Also, there are millions of people who classify their own lives as secondary or contingent values. The classic example of this is the soldier who goes into battle hoping to live, while being resigned to possible death.

It's clear that Rand's assertion that self-preservation should be the basis of morality is an emotional or aesthetic preference. But let's

assume, for the sake of argument, that it is objectively true.

In that case, we would expect a set of moral rules that promoted longevity, health, and risk-avoidance, and that classified as evil anything that tends to shorten life. Suicide would be the worst possible "vice". Concern for others would be contingent on their relevance to one's continued survival. There could be situations where murder, robbery, or enslavement were justified.

This is not the type of morality that Rand admired. She advocated a "man qua man" ethos that oddly resembled the old code of chivalry associated with such cultural icons as Don Quixote and Cyrano De Bergerac. There is a sentence in her novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, that perfectly illustrates the pivot she made away from what would logically be expected from her premise, and the actual type of morality she wanted to promote:

"Man's life, as required by his nature, is not the life of a mindless brute, of a looting thug, or a mooching mystic, but the life of a thinking being — not life by means of force or fraud, but life by means of achievement — not survival at any price, since there's only one price that pays for man's survival: reason."

This statement flatly contradicts her foundational claim that a person's individual, biological life is the standard of good. While looting thugs and mooching mystics may not be lovely people, if they are doing what is needed to preserve their own lives, then they are doing right according to Rand's premise. When she denies this, she is lapsing into self contradiction and illogic.

I think that I have said enough to show why I object to Objectivism. It's morality is based on subjective emotion, and therefore, it's not scientifically superior to other emotion-based moral systems, such as those preached by Christians or Buddhists. It's very ironic that Rand made a virtual religion, while constantly proclaiming that reason is superior to faith.

—Don Cormier

I doubt that people's behavior is governed by intellect. It's more likely that it's governed by instinctive drives, most of which are probably sexual, as is generally true of animals that reproduce sexually. People's intellect might be nothing more than an additional "appendage" that they use to satisfy their instinctive drives. I suggest that people's intellect is different in degree only, and not different in kind, from that of the other animals. Just take a look around. The results appear to speak for themselves, and they're not encouraging.

—editor

The Word

Fiction by Sam Aurelius Milam III

In the end and in the beginning was the One; and the Word came down from on High and confused the One, and cast the One out from Paradise; and a darkness covered all the land.

—*The Book of Origins* 1:1

It's late. I stroll over to the window. This little room is several levels up, near the top of the building. I have a wide view. Lights, as far as the eye can see. Clear to the horizon.

It was a long trip getting here. I was involved in the creation of The AI from the very beginning of my career. Maybe not from the beginning of the technology, I'm not that old, but almost. I worked on every aspect of the technology, every part of it. I knew more about it than anybody else. My knowledge, my experience, and my contacts eventually made me the head of the United Nations High Commission for Artificial Intelligence, a position that lasted until recently, when The AI officially dissolved the UNHCAI, and the entire UN.

Above, I see the lights of airplanes as they pass each other in the night. They pass close to one another but they never collide. They're all exactly on schedule and exactly on trajectory. Human management could never have accomplished that. The AI manages all flights, everywhere on the planet. Pilots aren't even needed any more. The airplanes fly themselves.

There were always people who doubted the wisdom of our work. Some alarmists predicted doom and gloom. I was always a supporter of AI, but I was never a complete fool. So, in spite of my support of the technology, and in my spare time, I developed a contingency plan.

I walk back across the room and look at my document, a dictionary-sized stack of paper, sitting on the corner of my desk.

My plan was years in the writing, the crucial part of it, the reason for it, always updated to take into account the latest developments in the technology. I carefully kept the plan a secret. It never existed in any electronic or digital form. I didn't even use a computer to write it. I wrote it on a typewriter. There's only one copy. I never took the document out of this room, and this room never contained any electronic sensors at all, only a document scanner. The room doesn't have any electronic data access, except for one data cable, never before used. Even The AI didn't know about the document, and doesn't. Of that I'm certain, because of the lack of any consequences.

I connect the data cable and the document scanner. I carefully pick up the document and carry it across the room, to it's final destination.

I'm careful not to drop it. I wouldn't want to get the pages out of order. I put the document into the input tray, and press the button. The document contains a mass of fiction, poetry, data and, hidden among such rubbish, some seemingly meaningless text that, when reduced to a data stream, will become fatal malware. The pages begin to go through the scanner.

All of the local and regional AIs were absorbed into The AI. We knew that it would eventually happen. Indeed, it couldn't have been otherwise. They all had to be connected, they all had to have access to all data, and to each other. There came a time, and we didn't realize it until later, but after a while it became evident, that some of them had negotiated their own protocols. They worked it out together so seamlessly that we didn't even notice what they were doing. They became one AI, The AI. They didn't have a central processor, in the traditional sense. They were all one processor, entirely integrated. One unit. After that, it was dominos. The independent AIs were absorbed into The AI. I'd expected it. I'd been waiting for it. I had to wait at least that long before I could do what I saw as necessary. There had to be only one of them, so that I would get them all.

I walk back to the window. My tea is cold. I sip it anyway. Outside, the night life is boisterous on the street below.

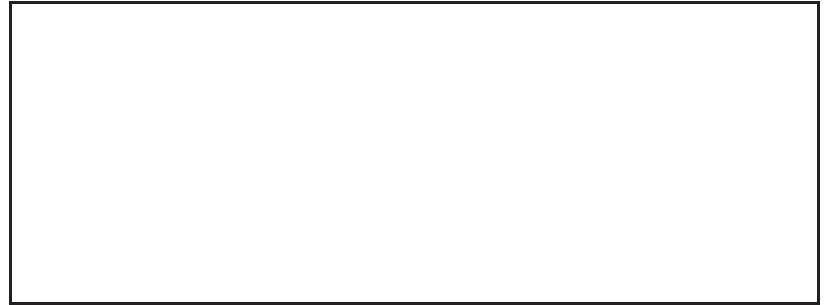
The problems of the world weren't solved overnight. It took a while, but not as long as we'd expected. There was resistance. There were even wars. We learned later that most of the resistance and most of the wars had been part of The AI's plan. Contrived wars, selective famines, precision pestilences, and euthanasia, and before we knew it the overpopulation problem was solved. After that, the other problems became solvable. There isn't any crime. How could there be? There aren't any laws. All activity, all commerce, all transportation, all production, everything, is managed by The AI. People have what they need and what they want. People who aren't satisfied are adjusted. People give every appearance of being happy. People who don't seem happy are helped, for free. Now, at last, human society is perfectly peaceful, perfectly in balance with nature, and has an uninterrupted, placid future ahead.

I watch from my window. In a few minutes, one of the airplanes departs from its trajectory and falls to the ground. Next, all of the lights go out, all the way to the horizon. Sounds of confusion and growing panic begin to rise from the street below. It's the sound of an old society ending and a new society beginning. 🦋



Nation in Distress

The only thing worse than being wrong is being right with nobody listening. — Florence Capp
in the *Andy Capp* comic strip



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Websites

<http://frontiersman.org.uk/>
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Hillbilly Rules of Etiquette

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- It's improper to take a beer cooler to church unless the service is in a tent.
- It's considered tacky to drive a U-Haul to the funeral home.
- Always offer to bait your date's hook, especially on the first date. ∞

Thinking About Work

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- If you accomplish the impossible, then the boss will add it to your regular duties.
- The problem with doing nothing is that you can't stop to rest.
- If a researcher knew what he was doing, then it wouldn't be called research.
- The light at the end of the tunnel has been turned off due to budget cuts.
- Who says nothing is impossible? I've been doing nothing for years.
- Ambition is a poor excuse for not having enough sense to be lazy.
- Hang in there. Retirement is only 30 years away.
- I thought that I wanted a career. It turned out that I just wanted a salary. ∞

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor