

December 4, 2008

Dear Friend of The Atlas Society:

Do you think selfishness is a virtue ... or a vice?

Barack Obama is certain it's a *vice*.

During the campaign, he maintained that "thinking only about yourself ... betrays a poverty of ambition" and urged every American to "hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself." He identified his greatest personal failing as "a certain selfishness on my part" and asserted that "the process for me of growing up was to recognize that it's not about me."

And in response to the characterization of his tax plans as "socialistic," he responded with a remarkable statement that he evidently thought was a slur: "I don't know when ... they decided they wanted to make a virtue out of selfishness."

Do he and his politico pals know that "the virtue of selfishness" is the moral foundation of Objectivism, the magnificent life- and individual-centered system of ethics created by Ayn Rand?

Do they suspect that if you take your own self-interest seriously, they won't be able to guilt-trip you into capitulating when they try to chip away at your liberty and lift your wallet?

Do they recognize that if you derive joy from your career and take pride in your achievements, that you won't sit still as they attempt to micromanage your life?

Do they understand that this unique and powerful system of ethics is your strongest weapon against their statist schemes?

These are the best reasons why, for your own sake, you should work with us to wield that weapon and aggressively fight their attempts to undermine rational self-interest and individual rights.

The brakes are off the runaway government

The 2008 presidential election offered no realistic choices for friends of freedom. Now, an Obama White House and a Democrat-packed Congress will assume they have a mandate to move full-speed ahead with their statist agenda.

Here's a preview of the dangers looming in 2009:

- **More direct intervention in the economy.** The federal government has already taken equity in businesses, purchased bad assets, and made loans of dubious quality. With the outrageous \$700 billion bailout still largely to be deployed, can more disastrous central planning schemes be far away? There's a term for this type of policy. It's called ...

economic fascism.

- **“Affordable universal health care”**—meaning socialized medicine. This from the same folks who created the current financial crisis in their misguided attempt to bring us “affordable housing”! Ted Kennedy says health care reform will be “a prime issue” on the new Senate’s agenda.
- **A draconian carbon tax** that will shred family budgets by driving up the price of everything ... from food to cars to houses to medicine.
- **Instituting more “compulsory voluntarism”** via political and financial pressure. The goal: to coerce individuals, beginning with students, to “volunteer” for community service. Many high schools already decree such servitude as a condition for graduation.
- **Limits on free and dissenting speech.** Liberals seek to impose controls on the content of radio and TV by reviving the “Fairness Doctrine.” An FCC commissioner even raised the possibility that this requirement would apply to online speech, including blogs.
- **Elimination of the secret ballot in union elections,** unleashing labor union organizers to intimidate workers.
- **Higher taxes on the prosperous and productive.** Obama has already promised windfall profit taxes on energy, higher marginal income tax brackets, increased capital gains taxes, and a plethora of others on business that will be passed along to consumers—if these confiscations don’t destroy enterprises outright.

So why do Americans put up with these abuses and violations of their liberty? And how will the Obama administration, Congress, and their intellectual apologists be able to implement their anti-individualist policies?

They want you to lie down on the tracks

The answer is simple: Proponents of bigger, more intrusive government will attempt to disarm us by attacking self-interest, thereby undercutting the moral foundation of individualism. This strategy hinges on duping citizens into accepting an *inversion of proper morality*—by lauding the alleged virtue of self-sacrifice.

With this perverted philosophy, you can bet they won’t hesitate to sacrifice *your* self-interest.

Sadly, Republican John McCain was no better than his rival. He parroted Obama by calling on Americans to “serve a cause greater than their self-interest.” Given this position, the GOP deserved to crash and burn.

At Salon.com, the popular left-liberal website, a commentator gloated: “We have taken [the country] back from the apostles of selfishness who pretend naked greed is noble individualism.”

And Alan Greenspan, of all people, said, “I made a mistake in presuming that the self-interest of organizations, specifically banks and others, were such as [*sic*] that they were best capable of protecting their own shareholders and their equity in the firm.” (Perhaps he mislaid his copy of *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*.)

Make no mistake. These politicians and their lapdog pundits will continue to denounce the values, goals, and desires of individuals—while glorifying collectives and fictitious group “rights.”

And they will continue to hammer away at the alleged failures of free markets, declare that “capitalism is dead,” and blame our economic problems—which were caused by *the failures of the mixed economy*—on self-interest, greed, and excessive freedom.

Ayn Rand clearly understood the philosophical roots of this assault. In explaining why capitalists silently submitted to the shackles of destructive legislation, she told us: “The answer lies in the facts that the lifeline feeding any social system is a culture’s dominant philosophy and that capitalism never had a philosophical base.”

She brilliantly observed that what mankind lacked is a morality of rational self-interest. That’s right: “the virtue of selfishness” so disparaged by our culture and by President-elect Obama.

“Let’s take a gun to this knife fight!”

While other free-market organizations do a fine job making the economic and practical case for liberty, they don’t consistently make the *moral* case. But we at The Atlas Society have the intellectual ammunition to deliver compelling arguments with real philosophical firepower.

For example....

Just as we have for the past two decades, we will take the *moral* position that if you earn your money honestly—whether you’re a banker or plumber, sports star or assembly-line worker, high-tech entrepreneur or sales clerk—you need not justify keeping it on the basis of performing some “service” to society, your neighbors, or the government. *It’s yours, period!*

Just as we have for the past two decades, we’ll uncompromisingly oppose the sort of “environmentalism” that puts the preservation of mud and mosquitoes—literally—above your need for housing, energy, and other resources. We’ll argue for the *virtue* of productively transforming the natural world around us to meet our needs. No one should experience undeserved guilt for driving an SUV, turning on a light, or drinking bottled water.

Just as we have for the past two decades, we will consistently argue that every paternalist welfare and entitlement program undermines the morality of independence, responsibility, and pride in governing one’s own life. These schemes create a culture of infantilism. They treat adults as if they can’t tie their shoes or wipe their noses without a federal nanny.

Of course, cultural change doesn’t happen overnight. But Objectivism has already had significant impact. For example, did you know that Objectivists played a major role in abolishing the military draft in 1974? And that a Library of Congress survey in 1991 found that *Atlas Shrugged* was the book that made the most difference in Americans’ lives, second only to the Bible?

Forging the weapons to win

It is only with your increased support that The Atlas Society will be able to escalate our efforts to fight the battles for individual liberty and economic freedom on *moral* grounds. That’s where, to be victorious, these battles *must* be fought.

With your help, we are fighting the war of ideas on many fronts:

- We’re taking Objectivism into the marketplace of ideas with op-eds, media appearances, speeches, emails, and website postings. Controversial topics our writers cover range from defending Columbus Day to lambasting Obama for suggesting that women be required to register for the military draft. And our essays have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Times*, and even *The Moscow Times*.

- We're getting the Objectivist message out through *The New Individualist*, our award-winning magazine, which attracts more people to the philosophy and introduces them to Objectivist-based answers and solutions to real-life issues. For example, *TNI's* article "The Self-Help Guide to Living in a Free Society," by Gen LaGreca, led to her guest appearances with Glenn Beck on his popular radio and CNN shows.
- We encourage an open intellectual community via our conferences, especially the annual Summer Seminar. We help qualified students attend by subsidizing their expenses. These newly enlightened students return to their campus communities able to communicate both the principles and the real-world applications of Objectivism. Fifty percent more students attended the Summer Seminar this year than last.
- We also support students via graduate school scholarships, graduate student seminars, and by providing introductory- and advanced-level Objectivist literature.
- The Atlas Society's completely redesigned website will make it easier to find, view, and download a wealth of valuable information and knowledge. Our archives will be available in text, audio, and video formats. Additionally, these resources will be aggressively promoted to the media and to others seeking an authoritative source on Objectivism. Over the past three years, visits to our website have *doubled*.

By the way, all this intellectual ammunition is not just for outreach, but is also available to our members for their personal use. Thus, you will have at your keyboard the tools you need to improve your life and help change our culture.

There's much more to accomplish, and that's why I need your help.

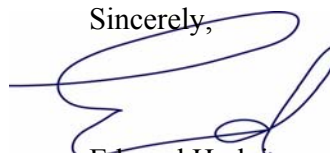
At this time of national leftward lurching, *we must take the offensive* to defend individualism. It's essential to promote a positive and benevolent alternative to the failed statist systems and confused cultures of the postmodern left and the pre-modern right.

This strategy is critical. Now is the time to intensify the assault on the anti-individualist and collectivist ideas that have produced today's political and economic mess. If not now, when? And if not you and I, who? If we fight on *moral* grounds, we can win.

Help yourself and your future. Join The Atlas Society or increase your support. Will you double your previous donation, or move up a membership level?

Your generous support of our mission promotes your self-interest by helping to create a benevolent and prosperous society. *Please respond with your highest contribution now.*

Sincerely,



Edward Hudgins
Executive Director

P.S. As I said above, the threats are real, imminent, and immense. The new administration and Congress are already making plans to intrude further on your life and liberty. Ask yourself: Am I doing enough to fight these threats? Will I later regret not stepping up to do more? Make a commitment that makes a difference: become a member or increase your support. There's no time to lose. *Your future depends on the decision you make today.*