

David Corzo - 20190432 - 2021/03/11

Socratic Discussion #7 – (1) Sliding down a slippery slope to fascism. (2) Conscious Capitalism Credo. (3) "Conscious Capitalism" is not an oxymoron.

Synthesis (200):

The first article comments on two articles written by the philosopher Ayn Rand with respect to fascism and socialism, in the articles she warns that America was drifting towards fascism. She very clearly explains what socialism and fascism are, as she says, fascism and socialism are at opposite ends, fascism is the extreme right and socialism (or communism) the extreme left. In practice, she mentions, there is no difference between the two, they are both a variant of the same thing, statism, and collectivism. In many articles she calls out President Kennedy and critiques his proposals for an intrusive welfare state, noting similarities with Kennedy's proposals and the ones made by the Nazi party in 1933. Rand also criticized the fact that most Americans were shifting towards 'moderation' as a way of opposing extremism, which in her view only played an enabler role in the implementation of a 'mixed economy' which is basically an economy consisting of enemy groups constantly in conflict where the survival of the fittest is the norm, very much similar to the Hobbesian concept of 'all against all' a system where groups in conflict feel the urge to attack each other first before being attacked themselves. Towards the end Rand warned that the collectivist and altruistic tendencies the US is taking is the first step towards fascism. The second comments on how conscious capitalism is an improvement over pure capitalism, not because business is unethical but rather because conscious capitalism reflects better where we are in the human journey. The third article advocates how conscious capitalism improves capitalism by the fact that it adds to everything good capitalism already is an extra layer of awareness and conscience to the mix that makes all the better.

New concepts (30 c/u):

- **Collectivism:** "Collectivism is the idea that the fundamental unit of the human species that thinks, lives, and acts toward goals is not the individual, but some group. In different variants, this group may be the family, the city, the "economic class," the society, the nation, the race, or the whole human species."

Source: <https://objectivismindepth.com/2016/01/22/what-is-individualism-what-is-collectivism/>

- **Altruism:** "The basic principle of altruism is that man has no right to exist for his own sake, that service to others is the only justification of his existence, and that self-sacrifice is his highest moral duty, virtue, and value."

Source: <https://fee.org/articles/no-ayn-rand-did-not-want-us-to-be-selfish/#:-:text=Rand%20vehemently%20opposed%20such%20an,duty%2C%20virtue%2C%20and%20value.>

Author description (50):

- George H. Smith (first article): He used to be the Senior Research Fellow for the Institute for Humane Studies, also a lecturer on the American History for Cato Summer Seminars, and an Executive Editor of Knowledge products. He is also an author; he has also written four books the most recent one being published in 2013 under the title "The system of Liberty".

Source: <https://www.libertarianism.org/people/george-h-smith> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._Smith

- John Mackey and Raj Sisodia: both are co-authors of a book published in 2013 called "Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business". Both also wrote the

second and third article defending conscious capitalism and how it is an improvement over traditional capitalism.

Source: <https://hbr.org/search?term=john%20mackey%20and%20raj%20sisodia>

Context description (50):

The first article was published in 2016, with the intent to revive the warning left by Ayn Rand that America is shifting towards fascism by accepting collectivist ideas. In this respect, the author remarks how in 1944, Ayn Rand wrote an article titled "Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Socialism are only superficial variations of the same monstrous theme, collectivism". In many such articles Rand makes the case that many countries that degenerated into socialist or fascism or Nazism started with very similar proposals of a big welfare state and a big government accompanied by the very convenient illusion of moderation. The intent of bringing to light such group of articles is to warn the public yet again over the recent proposals of the same type Kennedy, at the time, did. The second and third article were published somewhere in the second decade of the 21st century, they both intend to respond to the critiques of capitalism, recently many people have called it disingenuous to call one's self a capitalist and a moral, good, and ethical person. Although capitalism is driven by personal interest and greed, this does not necessarily mean it has to be unconscious, you can have a higher purpose and still be a capitalist.

Source: <https://www.libertarianism.org/columns/ayn-rand-fascism>

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259729322_Two_and_a_Half_Cheers_for_Conscious_Capitalism

Questions to the author:

1. If we must not remain moderate in ideology because we play the role of enablers, what shall we be?
2. Is collectivism bad in every possible way? Is there maybe something in which collectivism comes out on the top?

Sources of information:

Source in the article (50): The Ayn Rand Letter. (Nov. 8, 1971). In this letter, Rand makes the very interesting comparison between socialism and fascism. She draws no distinction between the two in practice, only in theory. She also states that fascism might as well be called "Socialism for bit business". Both fascism and socialism are forms of statism, which is also a form of collectivism. She ends the article advocating to consider the alternative system, Laissez-faire capitalism.

Source: <https://aynrand.org/novels/the-ayn-rand-letter/>

External sources (75): Objectivism: is a philosophical system developed by Ayn Rand, mostly this philosophy is expressed through novels and stories rather than on systematic treatises, late in her life she grew fond of writing essays instead. Objectivism overall is a philosophy that puts the focus on the individual and on the virtue of selfishness and opposition to altruism whose only purpose in life is to achieve his own happiness.

Sources: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objectivism>