

Study Guide for *The Philosophy of Objectivism*

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Lecture One

- Why is the metaphysical view of man so central to any philosophy? What kinds of issues does it bring together?
- How do the more fundamental branches of philosophy lead into the view of man?
- How does the non-normative view of man lead into the normative branches of philosophy?
- What is it that enables man to provide the things he needs to achieve values and survive?
- How can man be called the rational animal if men do not always act rationally?
- What metaphysical fact applies when LP says that some creatures are required to live in a group versus those who are not? What does this say about their means of survival?
- Describe the Objectivist view of the mind/body problem and indicate the importance of this question.
- What is the proper perspective on the proper relationship between theory and practice? How is it related to the ideas of the mind and body?
- Can you find in today's culture additional examples of dichotomies that result from the mind/body dichotomy that Dr. Peikoff mentions?
- What does it mean to say that emotions have definable intellectual causes? Describe how emotions link intellectual and perceptual causes.
- What accounts for the fact that many people experience a conflict between their reason and emotions?

Lecture Two

- What is the fundamental starting point of all philosophy?
- How does the philosophical concept of existence differ from the more conventional usage of the term? What does it include or not include?
- What does it mean to say that consciousness is a fundamental starting point? What if you know nothing about the process of consciousness?
- What does it mean to say Existence is Identity?
- What does it mean for some piece of knowledge to be considered self-evident?

- Explain the difference between proving the axioms of philosophy and demonstrating that they are axioms.
- What are the variety of forms of the primacy of consciousness?
- How is the primacy of existence a corollary of the axioms of philosophy? What is the cognitive status of a corollary?
- What does it mean for something to be objective, metaphysically? What would be an example of this?
- What is an entity in its primary sense? Give some examples and contrast them with the extended use of the term.
- Why is the concept of entity so central to thinking about reality?
- What is a general statement of the law of causality?
- What does it mean to say that only entities cause actions?
- Why does every entity not necessarily have a cause?

Lecture Three

- Human consciousness is conceptual and it is not automatic.
- Why is it so important to begin with the perspective that consciousness has identity?
- Using examples, explain why all forms of mysticism ultimately reduce to emotionalism?
- Describe the difference between the level of consciousness that is called sensation and perception? Why is one philosophically prior and one chronologically prior, and why does the concept “entity” help explain that?
- What is the basic argument for the validity of the senses?
- According to Objectivism what is the basic form of man’s power of choice?
- Describe and differentiate the state of focus of a human mind.
- What does it mean to say that the choice to focus is the primary choice?
- What does it mean to say that the primary choice does not have a reason versus saying all his other choices do have reasons?
- How is the state of evasion fundamentally different from the on versus off state of one’s mental focus?
- Describe how the exercise of volition does not depend on the extent of a man’s knowledge.
- What are the basic requirements that describe what is objective in epistemology?
- Contrast the intrinsic and subjective approaches with the objective approach.

Lecture Four

- How does the Objectivist answer to the question of the metaphysical status of sensory qualities answer an old philosophic problem. Explain using a specific sensory form.
- What are some of the unique features of the conceptual level of consciousness?
- What is the unit perspective so important in thinking?
- What is the role of words in concept formation?
- How does the quantitative relationship of concretes play a role in concepts?
- What does it mean to engage in abstraction?
- Explain each of the important elements of the Objectivist definition of a concept.
- How is concept formation related to the idea of algebra?
- What is a concept of consciousness?
- Define what a floating abstraction is, and give at least a few unique examples.
- What is the role of a definition in forming a concept?
- What is the rule of fundamentality?

Lecture Five

- What does it mean that human consciousness is limited in its unit economy? What implications does that have for concept formation?
- What is the role of a word in forming a concept?
- Contrast the intrinsic, subjective, and objective view of concepts by using an original example for each.
- How is knowledge dependent on context, on its relations?
- Describe the process of checking a new idea's logical context and integrating it using an original example.
- What is the spiral method, and how does it work?
- What does it mean to reduce a higher level concept? Using some higher-level abstraction, demonstrate the process.
- What is the fallacy of the stolen concept? Give at least two examples.
- What is an invalid concept? How is it different from a mis-integrated concept?
- What is an anti-concept? How is it different from an invalid concept?
- Explain what Dr. Peikoff calls "Rand's Razor."

Lecture Six

- What does it mean to declare that a conclusion is certain?
- What is the scale of assessments for evaluating a conclusion or a fact?
- Contrast the meaning of possible, probable, and certain.
- What is a contradiction to say something is uncertain knowledge?
- What is the common understanding of the idea of an absolute? Compare it to the proper understanding.
- What is an arbitrary idea? How do we identify when an idea or argument is arbitrary?
- How is it correct to say that the arbitrary assertion is worse than the false one?
- How does the approach of agnosticism amount to concessions to the arbitrary?
- Describe the relationship and difference between rationality and rationalism.
- Why is the approach of “rationalist polemics” so dangerous to good thinking?
- Describe and contrast the relationship between emotions and facts using concrete examples.
- What are the ways that people attempt to evade the law of causality?
- State the broadest formulation of the law of causality and differentiate it from the common mechanistic view.
- What is the concept of psycho-epistemology?

Lecture Seven

- What does it mean that life is goal directed?
- Why is the fundamental alternative of life and death the only source of values?
- Why is it wrong to say that life is a value as a means to an end?
- What is the difference between values generally and moral values?
- Where do intrinsicists and subjectivists say values come from?
- What is the factual basis for virtue according to Objectivism?
- How are the main virtues encompassed by the fundamental virtue of rationality? Explain at least two examples.
- What is the main vice according to Objectivism?
- Why is it impossible to have a self-contained evasion?
- What is the proper relationship between rationality and emotions? What implications does this have when they are in conflict?
- What does Objectivism consider to be the purpose of ethics?

- What philosophic question applies to the issue of egoism? What are the alternatives? What is left out of the question of egoism?
- What is the validation of egoism?

Lecture Eight

- What is the difference between the intellectual and the existential aspects of the virtue of independence? Describe examples that illustrate each.
- What is the unique perspective that the virtue of integrity has on the idea of loyalty? How is it applied?
- What does the mind-body question have to do with integrity?
- Why is integrity such a controversial virtue?
- Using an example, explain when compromise is and is not consistent with the virtue of integrity. What are the deeper reasons why this distinction is existentially necessary.
- Explain how the virtue of honesty can be described as refusing to hide from reality.
- How is the Objectivist validation of the idea of honesty different from the conventional account?
- What existential facts make productiveness a necessary virtue?
- What is the role of a central purpose in man's life?
- What are some of the ethical consequences of the soul-body dichotomy?
- How are the mistaken views of sex both rooted in the mind-body dichotomy? What are the consequences of the wrong views?
- Explain the moral/practical dichotomy by using two real world examples of how people make this mistake.
- What is the fundamental reason that explains why evil is impotent? Why do other views contradict this view? What has facilitated evil's apparent practical success in the world?
- What is the deepest root of the idea that happiness is the natural state of existence but it also the sign of achievement?
- How is setting happiness as the standard of ethics actually an anti-life approach?
- What does Objectivism mean by the benevolent universe premise?

Lecture Nine

- What are the three main elements of practicing the virtue of justice?
- Describe two ways that one can violate the requirements of justice using real world examples.

- Explain how the validation of justice answers the question, “why should man practice justice?”
- What is the difference between judging and psychologizing?
- How does justice embody what Objectivism calls the trader principle?
- With regard to justice, what is the difference between mercy and forgiveness?
- How does egalitarianism destroy the ability to practice justice?
- Why is it a requirement of human life to have an objective self evaluation?
- What does it mean to aim at moral perfection?
- How is physical force antithetical to the mind?
- Why is physical coercion the only means of shutting down the mind?
- How is fraud a species of force?
- Why do intrinsicism and subjectivism both require resorting to force?
- Why do rights specifically pertain to actions not objects?
- Why is the right to life the only fundamental right? What are the corollary rights?
- Explain how a proper understanding of rights prevents there from being conflicts of rights.
- What is the only means by which rights can be violated? How do you know objectively when this has happened?
- Explain why the retaliatory use of force must be exclusive?
- Why is the government even more necessary for non-criminal matters?
- Why is consent not the source of the government’s power?

Lecture Ten

- What is the relationship between morality and economics via politics?
- How does capitalism rest upon the ethics of egoism?
- Why does the understanding of the objectivity of values lead to capitalism as a social system?
- What are the two types of objective values? What are contemporary examples?
- Explain the two senses of the idea of objective law.
- What differentiates economic and political power?
- How does the pyramid ability explain how everyone benefits from freedom?
- Why do intellectuals today always come to anti-capitalist positions?
- How does statism rest on false moral views; on false epistemological views? Give a few examples of statist policies and their underlying roots.
- Why is anarchism incompatible with individualism? Why is it incompatible with the mind?

- How does the mixed economy encourage pragmatism and compromise?

Lecture Eleven

- What is the purpose of art in human survival?
- What about the nature of humans makes art necessary?
- What conceptual problem gives rise to the specific need for art?
- What steps does the artist take in translating metaphysical judgments into a concrete object?
- Why must art necessarily be selective?
- Explain why didactic art is contrary to the proper view of art.
- What is the idea of a sense of life according to Objectivism?
- How does the sense of life develop? Concretize by using some examples.
- How is explicit philosophy related to sense of life?
- Define what romanticism is, properly understood.
- What two elements of a work of art does the artist use to project his sense of life?
- What is the nature of a plot and its three key elements?
- Why is romanticism not synonymous with good art?
- Describe some of the generalized principles by which one can judge art.
- Why is one's philosophic judgment different from one's esthetic judgment?

Lecture Twelve

- What does it mean to study the philosophy of history?
- Describe the main views in each branch of philosophy in the two major philosophic views in history.