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THE INTEGRATION OF MIND AND BODY IN THE NOVELS OF AYN RAND

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ABSTRACT

Rand's novels lend us an insight into her unique philosophy of Objectivism. Her novels expound the concept of unity and integration of the mind and the body. Defying all set standards, Rand creates her ultimate heroes who follow their free will rather than conform to the accepted norms and moral codes set by society and religion. Rand's philosophy suggests that the mind and body of an individual is inseparable and any individual who tries to separate the two, ends up suffering both mentally and physically. An individual is a sum total of his thoughts and actions but an organised society enforces its norms on the individual and forces him to behave in accordance with its standards. This leads to various layers of conflicts in an individual. Only by breaking away from this societal conditioning, would the mind be free to act of its own volition.

Key Words: Mind Body Dualism, Integration, Societal and Religious Conditioning

"Man is an indivisible entity, possessing both elements—but not to be split into them, since they can be considered separately only for purposes of discussion, not in actual fact. In actual fact, man is an indivisible, integrated entity..." Ayn Rand

The mind body connectivity and integration plays a vital role in the holistic life of an individual. Man is the sum total of his thoughts and actions. In her novel "We The Living", Andrei voices out Rand's idea of man as a complete whole, in his speech to the Party club when he declares that '...man is born, alone, complete, an end in himself.' In the process of evolution external forces have redesigned and reinforced certain set patterns of behaviour thus affecting the inherent nature of man. The control exerted on man's thoughts made it difficult for him to act as per the whims of his body, gradually conditioning his emotional responses to what is deemed as morally and ethically sound. Behaviour was slowly categorized into 'good' and 'bad',

'acceptable' and 'unacceptable'. This conditioning of responses to stimuli had a drastic impact on the individuality of man. As unique is every man, his responses to similar situations should also have been unique but social conditioning restricted his innate and inherent characteristics and urged him to behave in an accepted pattern. Thus individual responses gave way to social and collective responses.

Another theory that has been detrimental to the individuality of man is the mind body dichotomy. This dualistic theory applies to the belief that the mind and the body belong to two different realms. The mind has been assigned to a spiritual level whereas the body is considered to be part of a more ignoble material realm. This train of thought has been adverse to man's freedom of action as the need to be identified with the loftier, spiritual level of the mind has curbed and controlled his physical needs. The accepted and standard norms of society

tend to control a person's personality. Deciding the supremacy of mind over the body, society has been instrumental in making the individual realize that evil desires of the body needs to be curbed and one should rise from the baser needs of the body and act as per the higher dimensions set by the mind.

Religious interests have furthered this dichotomy by branding people who were weak enough to surrender to the sins of the flesh. This, they believed, would ultimately lead to one's declining faith in God and one's spirituality to be doomed. Man's thoughts were controlled and redirected to adhere to the moral needs of the society. In order to strengthen their selfish interest of having supreme power over man and his actions, society and religion joined forces and acted in unison.

Social and religious consequences for unacceptable behaviour aimed at restraining the baser and animalistic instincts of man. Without the concept of rewards and punishments it would have been difficult for any religion to strengthen their grip on the individual and ensure his adherence to virtues deemed moral by religious groups. The fear of hell served its purpose. Man surrendered his mind to these external forces.

The mind body split ensured religion's control over man. While this drastically affected the individual in general the damage has been profound on the women. In consequence to her role in the reproductive process and her primary position in safeguarding the traditional family system, the implications of the mind body split has been extremely oppressive. Moral transgressions that would have been forgiven in a man were considered unpardonable offences in a woman.

Rand's philosophy which is explicit and the base of all her works aims at achieving a mind body integration. Objectivism does not treat mind and body as two separate types of entities. As Chris Matthew Sciabarra observes Rand's 'desire (was) to secularize the spiritual and spiritualize the material and her works, entails a total and unequivocal rejection of the mind-body dichotomy and all the false alternatives it engenders'.

Many a times man is confronted by feelings and emotions which are not in any way

connected to external or physical circumstances. These might seem to threaten his emotional security and could hamper the clarity of his thought and action. The three different and equally important faculties of man namely- the body, mind and spirit may seem to be at war with one another and this could lead to the disastrous conflicts.

Ayn Rand through the heroes portrayed in her novels, has categorically emphasised that in every human action and relation, the mind and body works as one single entity. Bringing both mind and body in the same plane, Rand has shown us the right approach to overcoming conflicts in life and achieving a sense of balance and harmony within oneself.

As Rand aimed to create non-conformist individuals and fight against collectivism, it did little to her cause to let her protagonist be guided either by the state or religion. Her hero had to be the complete master of his mind and deny any external control on his thoughts. He acted according to his ideals. The needs of his body were never in conflict with his thoughts or his ideals.

Rand's novel 'Atlas Shrugged' has been instrumental in propagating her philosophy of the mind body integration. Through her strong characterization of the four powerful individuals - Hank Rearden, Dagny Taggart, Francisco d'Anconia and John Galt, Rand has given man the choice to follow the dictates of his mind and act accordingly to reach his highest potential. Rand rejected the metaphysical dualists who had bifurcated human existence. She proclaimed in her journal that "Man is an indivisible entity." Mind and body "can be considered separately only for purposes of discussion, not in actual fact," she explains. Thus, in the projection of her "ideal man," John Galt, there is "no intellectual contradiction and, therefore, no inner conflict" between mind and body."

Her treatment of romantic love in her novels is suggestive of the fact that even in an emotion that is closely related to the heart, the mind plays a vital role. Romantic love is a "union of mind and body that both people pursue for their own happiness." Even in love actions that are not guided by thoughts are performed without exercising the option of choice and can therefore be likened to mechanical actions- actions which are

based only on the innate desire to survive and in no way related to man's happiness. The physical union between man and woman is not something to be ashamed of but to be cherished and celebrated.

Rand has rejected, through her works, not just the mind body dichotomy but has also challenged the other dichotomies.

"By connecting reason and production, thought and action, theory and practice, fact and value, morality and prudence, Rand intended to uncover the "deeper, philosophical error" upon which these various dichotomies were based. As such, *Atlas Shrugged* was designed to "blast the separation of man into 'body' and 'soul,' the opposition of 'matter' and 'spirit'" (Rand 1997, 551).

All her protagonists are portrayed as supreme intellectuals yet there is no friction between their actions and thoughts or reason and emotion. Her heroes are adept in balancing their physical and spiritual natures. They don't seem to have the dilemma of choosing one over the other. As Rand dramatizes, once you start focussing on your thoughts you will find the means to materialize your thoughts into actions and then integration of thoughts and actions would come to us as natural as breathing. Rand's ideal man is thus 'a fully integrated personality, a man whose mind and emotions are in harmony, whose sense of life matches his conscious convictions'.

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