

## Ayn Rand and Bridge

I owe a large portion of my success in bridge, and in life, to novelist Ayn Rand. She is best known outside literature for her political views, but she published work in all branches of philosophy, not just politics. Rand called her philosophy Objectivism and summarized it as follows:

“My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.”

Objectivism is applicable to bridge in innumerable ways. I find two the most important.

First is Rand’s insistence that reason is one’s only means of acquiring knowledge. To be successful a bridge player must pay attention to all kinds of subtle clues, some at the subconscious level, but whatever he feels he should always have a reason for his actions. Rand put it succinctly – “Emotions are not a means of cognition.”

The second is Rand’s assertion that man has free will. This seems self-evident to most of us, but the bulk of modern philosophers disagree. Rand identified the seat of free will as one specific choice: to think or not to think. I’ve watched many opponents who, when presented with a problem at the table, simply refuse to deal with it – in effect they have “blanked out” their reason. Even worse, I sometimes catch myself doing the same thing! My results improve in proportion to the extent that I can focus on solving problems at the table. “Going with the flow” just doesn’t work at bridge.

To find out more about Ayn Rand and Objectivism read one of her novels -- I’d start with *Atlas Shrugged* or *The Fountainhead* -- or visit the web site of the Ayn Rand Institute at [www.aynrand.org](http://www.aynrand.org)

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