

Naples Daily News

Right and wrong

By: Robert A. Levy

Remarkably, Jean Hewitt-Taylor's Nov. 11 letter misrepresents Ayn Rand's position on every topic.

On selfishness: Rand embraces "rational selfishness," which requires neither self-sacrifice nor sacrifice of others. Hewitt-Taylor seems to equate selfishness with trampling the rights of others to achieve personal goals. Nothing could be further from Rand's beliefs.

On greed: If greed is the desire to become rich by trading value for value, Rand approves. But when wealth is obtained by force or fraud, then said Rand, "All the things you buy will become, not a tribute to you, but a reproach; not an achievement, but a reminder of shame."

On survival of the fittest: Social Darwinists posit that individuals' interests are in fundamental conflict: for one person to succeed, another must fail. In stark contrast, Rand believes rational interests are in fundamental harmony — voluntary trade is a positive sum game; each participant not only survives, but is better off.

On abortion: Rand argues that "abortion is a moral right — which should be left to the sole discretion of the woman involved." Hewitt-Taylor is woefully misinformed if she thinks Rand is a right-winger on abortion.

On fascism: Under fascism, wrote Rand, citizens are "without freedom to act;" "government officials hold the economic, political and legal power of life or death;" the state extols "leadership without purpose, program, or direction — and power for power's sake." Does that sound like an endorsement of fascism?

Criticism of Ayn Rand is fair game. First, let's get the facts straight.