

**Review Timeless Principles of the American Founding**

**Two Conflicting Premise Sets from LPR Class #1:** – in this class, we discuss the American founding, the Declaration of Independence, the need for a constitution and how the founders dealt with the issue of slavery. There are two conflicting sets of premises that underlie today’s culture and Americans understanding of the foundation for their government.

1. a) America (capitalism) was founded based upon exploitation: slavery.

Vs.

b) America was founded upon the principle of individual rights to pursue values.

2. a) Man’s nature is malleable and to be shaped by government for the collective good. (Progressivism/Collectivism/Altruism)

Vs.

b) Man has a specific nature (the rational animal: spiritual and physical) and requires a specific social context (freedom) to survive and thrive. (Rationality/Individualism/Egoism)

**Crucial Connection:**

**Founding Principle > Socio-Economic System**

Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness > Self Interest -Freedom/Trade - Capitalism

Governments Sole Purpose is Protecting > Individual Rights

### Checking Your Premises

“Check your premises” is a phrase Ayn Rand became famous for using as a philosophical detection device – aimed at making one’s views explicitly clear. In Atlas Shrugged, we encounter many instances of characters’ implicit premises driving their behavior, just as our own premises shape our views and drive our behavior.

**Today’s Objective:** To have LPR class members able to identify both their own deeper premises regarding public policy, economics and the role of government as well as the dominant contradictory premises in today’s culture.

### Review Big Picture for Defenders of Capitalism

#### 4 Major Questions for DoC:

1) What is Capitalism?

#### Brief conceptual answer:

Social system based on individual rights, including property rights, where all property is privately owned

2) Does Capitalism Work?

Yes! Capitalism is the system that has produced most wealth, health, and happiness for humans.

3) Is Capitalism Good?

Yes! Capitalism is the only moral social system ever devised since it is based on man’s unique nature.

4) What should I do?

Be a good capitalist – Produce, trade and be happy. Citizen/leader: Champion your life: Defend Capitalism

## Exercise – Identify underlying premises from your reading.

### Atlas Shrugged Quotes:

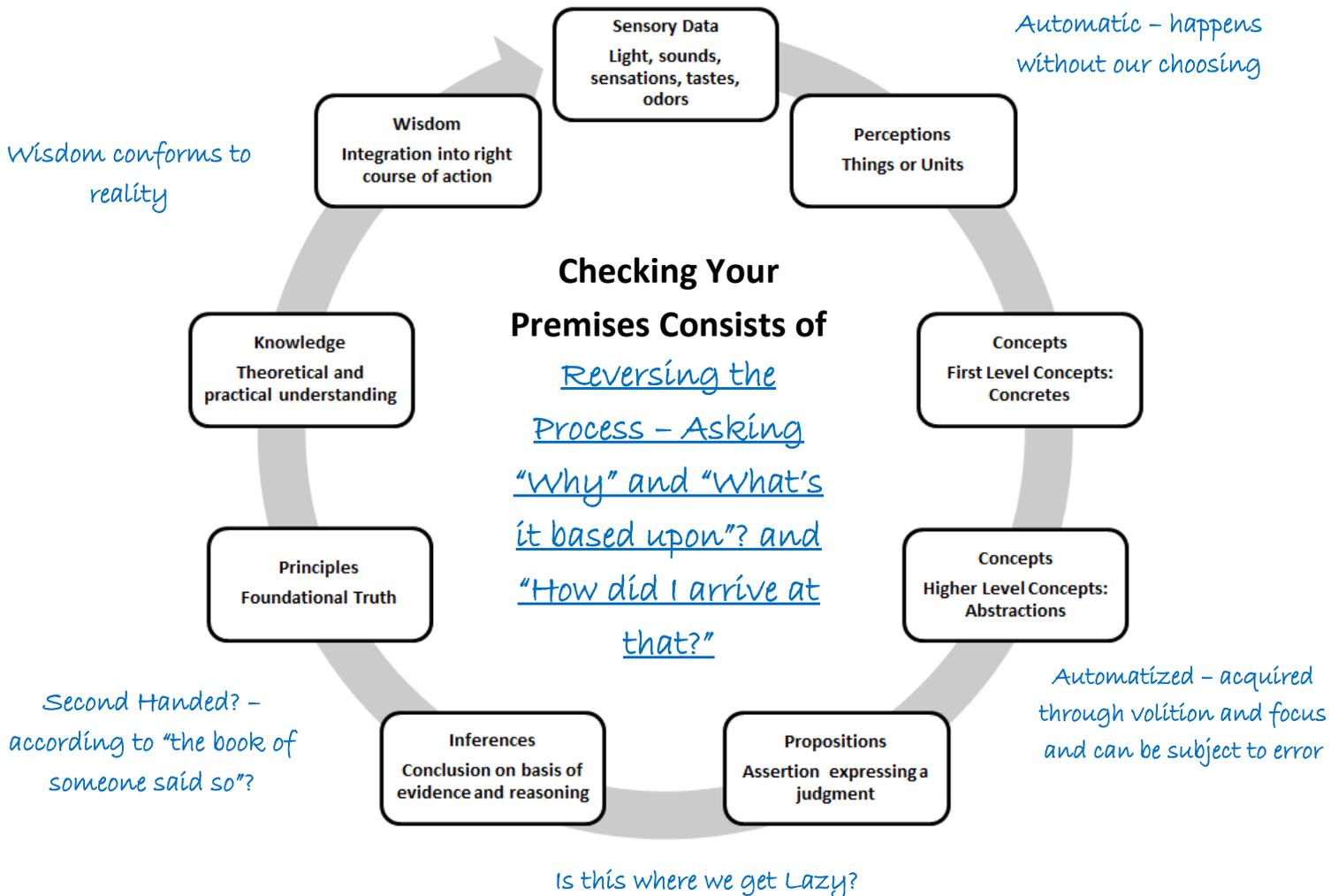
1. Rearden at anniversary party (p127): “He had always known that business was regarded as some sort of secret, shameful cult, which one did not impose on innocent laymen, that people thought of it as an ugly necessity, to be performed but never mentioned, that to talk shop was an offense against higher sensibilities, that just as one was washed machine grease off one’s hands before coming home, so one was supposed to wash the stain of business off one’s mind before entering a drawing room. He had never held that creed, but he had accepted it as natural that his family should hold it.”
2. Dr. Pritchett on favoring the Equality of Opportunity Bill (p132): “...I am in favor of a free economy. A free economy cannot exist without competition. Therefore, men must be forced to compete. Therefore, we must control men in order to force them to be free.”
3. Balph Eubank (p133): “Morality, free will, achievement, happy endings and man as some sort of heroic being – all that stuff is laughable to us.”
4. Francisco to Rearden at party (p146-147): “You stood here and watched the storm with the greatest pride one can ever feel – because you are able to have summer flowers and half naked women in your house on a night like this, in demonstration of your victory over that storm. And if it weren’t for you, most of those who were here would be left helpless at the mercy of that wind in the middle of some such plain.”
5. (p. 162-163) “Muscles, Miss Taggart,” Ben Nealy the contractor had said to her, “muscles – that’s all it takes to build anything in the world.” ...”She wondered whether boulders, trees and muscles could ever bridge that canyon. She wondered why she found herself thinking suddenly that cave-dwellers had lived naked on the bottom of that canyon for ages.”

### Economics in One Lesson Quotes:

1. “The faith in all these policies, it will be found, springs from two acts of shortsightedness. One is to look at the matter only from the standpoint of the farmers that borrow. The other is to think only of the first half of the transaction.”
2. “The art of economics consists in looking not merely at the immediate but at the longer effects of any act or policy; it consists in tracing the consequences of that policy not merely for one group but for all groups.”
3. “This is to talk as if the country were the same sort of unit of pooled resources as a huge corporation, and as if all that were involved were a mere bookkeeping transaction. The government spenders forget that they are taking the money from A in order to pay it to B. Or rather, they know this very well; but while they dilate upon all the benefits of the process to B, and all the wonderful things he will have which he would not have had if the money had not been transferred to him, they forget the effects of the transaction on A. B is seen; A is forgotten.”



- The Beautiful { Aesthetics/Day to Day Culture What do I respond to emotionally?
- The Good { Politics and Economics What should I do? And regarding others?  
Morality and Ethics What is good and right? Is there a code?
- The True { Epistemology How do I know? How can I prove it?  
Metaphysics What is real? What is the nature of the world I live in?





	<b>Sample Pairs of Conflicting Premises:</b> (b) is correct premise in each case.	<b>Relevant Fundamental:</b>
1.	a. Everyone has a right to adequate healthcare. VS <b>b. No one has a right to the fruits of another person's productivity.</b>	No right to violate rights
2.	a. All cultures are equally valuable. VS <b>b. Some cultures are hostile to human life and happiness, some promote it.</b>	American Exceptionalism vs. Multiculturalism - the issue of volition
3.	a. America was founded on democratic principles. VS <b>b. America was founded on the principle of every individual's right to his own life, liberty, property and pursuit of happiness – none of which can be properly taken away by a vote of his fellow man.</b>	Democracy (mob rule) vs. Inalienable Rights
4.	a. Everyone knows the government must stimulate demand for our economy to get growing. VS <b>b. All attempts at coercive stimulation are against what individuals would do on their own and so distort our economy, destroy wealth and make it that much harder to recover.</b>	Distortion of values and actions vs. Crucial Function of Prices
5.	a. The price of a <u>necessity</u> should be set or capped by the government so everyone can afford it. VS <b>b. Prices are a function of supply and demand and if you cap them you'll actually reduce their supply thereby further hurting those who can least afford it.</b>	Need ≠ claim Distorting Prices inverts supply. Property Rights
6.	a. Profits are immoral incentives that encourage greed. VS <b>b. Profits are the driving force of material and technological progress achieved by humankind over the centuries.</b>	Pursuit of Happiness = self-interest. Life as standard.
7.	a. Laissez Faire capitalism caused the Great Depression. VS <b>b. Statism and altruism caused the Great Depression.</b>	Cause vs. effect.
8.	a. Advertising is propaganda peddled by hucksters to naive citizens. VS <b>b. Advertising is publicity and differentiation designed to communicate the benefits of products to potential customers.</b>	Censorship vs. Free Speech
9.	a. We must have public education if our way of life is to survive. <b>b. We must educate the public if we are to preserve our freedoms.</b>	Proper Role of Government
10.	a. Business is a dirty necessity. <b>b. Creating, producing and distributing products and services are noble and serve man's life.</b>	Mind/body dichotomy vs. pursuit of happiness
11.	a. Airline security requires intrusive universal scrutiny. <b>b. Airline security requires a proper foreign policy.</b>	False premise: security vs. freedom
12.	a. Politicians are ignorant, poll-watching windbags. <b>b. Politicians were/can be true statesmen who lead with great personal character, understanding and principled persuasion.</b>	False view of man's nature/role of gov.