

AYN RAND AND THE LITERARY CRITICS

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The failure of Ayn Rand's critics and reviewers to properly come to terms with her novels is known to those who have followed her career in the literary press. I propose here to examine the enormity of that failure, focusing upon particular aspects of published reviews that will illustrate the problem.

The basic problem can be stated in general terms: critics and reviewers have been unable to pass intelligent judgment on her work because they have never assimilated it; they cannot grasp its achievement because they have never risen as high as her point of view. And of these limitations they have no awareness, largely because they tend, as a group, to reduce philosophy to a set of accepted creeds, presuming the ends of philosophy (or philosophy as they conceive it) to be knowable in advance.

The characters in Ayn Rand's novels have been ridiculed. The ideas in her novels have been hotly contested. Even her literary methods have been disputed in the literary press. With the publication of each of her novels, [1] *We the Living* (1936) to *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), the contention has escalated. With the publication in 1969 of *The Romantic Manifesto*, which is concerned with Rand's aesthetics of the novel, the position of the literary press has become condemnation; the book is regarded as heresy against presumed ends. And her novels have rarely been considered on their own terms, either aesthetically or thematically.

The methods of literary judgment reflected in these reviews betray an appalling ignorance of the critical method. Even when Rand is reviewed by persons otherwise possessing the faculty of critical judgment, the reviews, if carefully analyzed, rarely rise above the level of opinion. Opinion, of course, is not responsible literary criticism.

The failure of critics and reviewers to regard her work organically (that is, to regard it in terms of the evidence of the book itself, allowing no outside considerations) is clearly evident. Those reviewers who focus on the personality of Ayn Rand, at the expense of the book, are

falling into biographical entanglements, which are both gratuitous and uncertain in matters of literary judgment. These are only a few of the problems. There are errors of interpretation, errors of fact, errors of method, some of which I hope to isolate and identify in terms of their specific commission. Whatever else they may be, the published reviews of Ayn Rand's novels, where they fall short of authentic literary judgment, clearly demonstrate a tendency toward indoctrination.

WE THE LIVING

Ayn Rand has written of *We the Living* [2] that in its larger sense it is not a novel about Soviet Russia but rather about Man against the Totalitarian State. All of the reviews of this novel focus upon the Soviet background, some at length. Nearly all describe it as "a novel of life in Russia today," but none understood the metaphor Rand intended. The reviewer for *The Saturday Review of Literature* [3] considered it a period-piece, largely an historical novel dealing with a particular period of Soviet history. The reviewer, Irina Skariatina, a Russian-born writer, described the period (the year 1922) as "one of the most chaotic in Russia's history," but goes on to say that "a new freedom" later embraced all the social classes. In concluding her review she displays considerable naivete when she remarks, "Thank God that period for my people has passed," a curious remark when one considers the record of Soviet history.

But the common complaint in the reviews of *We The Living* focuses upon the characterizations, centering for the most part upon Kira Argounova, the heroine. *The Saturday Review of Literature* said all the characters "display some form of weakness," but neglected to support that opinion with any evidence. *The Spectator* [4] said: "But towards Kira, who stands for individualism and those little things like scent and lipsticks which Mean So Much to a woman, Miss Rand is altogether too partial. If Kira had played the game with nice Red Andrei instead of nasty White Leo . . . we might have liked her better." Rand has juxtaposed items of luxury (lipstick and perfume) against a background of deprivation (starvation and brutality) to make a point. The reviewer in *The Spectator* may take such luxuries for granted, or so we may assume from the attitude taken, while to Kira they can never be taken for granted. Moreover, they are symbols of another world, "something from abroad," and they bring with them the suggestion of a better life, a promise of freedom. *The Spectator* would have preferred Kira to "play the game," to bend in her choice of values, be more

willing to compromise. In other words, a Kira who is both a pragmatist and opportunist. Comrade Victor Dunaev is such a character in *We the Living*, and of all the characters in the novel he is the most contemptible. Comrade Victor "plays the game" by insinuating himself into the Party, by marrying a peasant girl merely to enhance his image before the Party, and finally by betraying his own sister and her lover to the G.P.U., and to prison in Siberia.

The New Statesman and Nation [5] said that while Kira reflected what must have been the fate of the young intellectuals under the Soviet regime, she "appears to have been a very tiresome young woman." The reviewer in *The Nation* [6] could find no reason to respect Kira as "Rand's spokesman," could discover no honorable or proper motivation to her characterization, and concluded with the statement that her views "would conceivably make her a mystic."

CONFLICT WITH THE STATE

To properly understand the characterizations in *We the Living*, they must be kept in focus against the background of the Totalitarian State, where the possibilities for freedom are so severely restricted, or absent altogether, that the milieu becomes deterministic. Those characters in the novel that do seek to choose personal values are thrown into conflict with the State; they struggle against a political determinism, not a determinism derived of biology or science (as with Naturalism). In such an environment every human action must be dedicated to the power and glory of the State; the pursuit of personal values is regarded as bourgeois, and worse. There is no concept of the individual; people are regarded as classes, masses, or collective units. When Leo Kovalensky is stricken with tuberculosis, he and Kira learn that he cannot be admitted into a State Hospital in the Crimea because he lacks status. He is *persona non grata* with the State. He has no Party card, no official status. He has even been expelled from the State University for unsympathetic views toward the Party, and for his aristocratic background. Kira visits a number of Party officials and pleads for Leo's life, but she is denied any consideration. In desperation, Kira seeks help from an admirer, Andrei Taganov, a Party hero and a member of the G.P.U. She becomes Andrei's mistress; he gives her enough money so that she is able to buy a hospital bed for Leo in the Crimea. Andrei, however, is not aware of Kira's motives. He does not know of Kira's love for Leo, or that his money will be used to save Leo's life.

Kira is forced into this deception of two men not because she lacks virtue, but

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because she possesses virtue. Given the deterministic background of the novel, Kira acts to save Leo in the only way possible. Her deception is not one of choice as choice, but rather a consequence of forces beyond her control. If the characters of *We the Living* appear tragic, that tragedy is best understood not as a tragedy of individual competence or virtue, in the sense of personal failure, but rather as a tragedy of individuals denied the possibilities of freedom and choice by the State.

The New York Times complained that the novel blundered "into palpable improbabilities":

Her novel is slavishly warped to the dictates of propaganda. . . . It is only the blind fervor with which she dedicates herself to the annihilation of the Soviet Union that has led her to blunder into palpable improbabilities. We refer strictly to artistic probability: we cannot question the facts upon which Miss Rand's political attitude is based.[7]

This reviewer appears to say that while he cannot question the facts upon which Rand's political attitude is based, she has, in her fervor, distorted art into propaganda. The reviewer does not identify any of the "palpable improbabilities." To determine whether this criticism has any merit we must examine for ourselves certain key elements of the novel. In terms of plot, is it improbable that Leo would be stricken with tuberculosis and that his life would hang on the possibility of admission into a hospital in the Crimea? Is it improbable that Kira would act as she did to save Leo? Is it improbable that Comrade Victor would betray his sister to the G.P.U. in order to enhance his prestige with the Party? Is it improbable that Leo Kovalensky would become, in his frustration with the State, dissolute and irresponsible? Is it improbable that Andrei Taganov would commit suicide when he realized that his idealism had been betrayed by the Party, and when he realized that Kira was lost to him? Then is it improbable that Kira, in a last desperate attempt for freedom, would be shot and killed trying to cross the border?

We are finally left to wonder what these "palpable improbabilities" are. Could Ayn Rand's use of language or style possibly be construed as propagandistic? No, for the same reviewer tells us she writes with "a remarkably fluent English. . . . Actually Miss Rand can command a good deal of narrative skill, and her novel moves with alacrity and vigor upon occasion."

In *We the Living*, Rand wants the reader to see the horror and despair of life in the Totalitarian State. She has deliberately painted a severe and depressing picture; she has pulled no punches. The death scene of Maria Petrovna is full of

agony and hopelessness. The farewell scene of Sasha and Irina on their way to separate concentration camps in Siberia is a crushing and unforgettable piece of writing. It is forceful writing, disquieting in its implications, but it should never be mistaken for propaganda.

THE FOUNTAINHEAD

In *The Fountainhead* (1943), Rand allows her characters unrestricted freedom of choice. The plot develops out of such choice and the consequent acts of choice. The conflict in the novel is largely a classic conflict between hero and villain, both drawn larger-than-life. What is remarkable about the hero, Howard Roark, is that he is one of the few representations in all literature of the guiltless hero.

Historically, the hero in art and literature has been portrayed almost exclusively as representative of orthodox Christian values. In medieval times a vast literature was developed around the symbol of the Holy Grail and the quest for it, a huge corpus of legend, romance and allegory. In the Arthurian Legends, the search for the Grail was the source of most of the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table. The Knight in his quest became the model for the hero. And the characterization of the Knight-Hero incorporated most of the orthodox Christian virtues. He frequently dedicated himself to the cause of charity (altruism), even though it might cost him his life (sacrifice). Consider how often in literature the hero is required to make the supreme sacrifice. It is usually through an act of sacrifice that the hero finds his redemption, his personal and spiritual salvation.

Since his character was conceived largely in terms of Christian virtues, or the ethical teachings that derive out of Christianity, the Knight-Hero necessarily inherited the frailties of Man, notably original sin. The doctrine of original sin holds that guilt or sin is inherited by all persons. The notion of guilt or sin, in this sense, becomes both individual and collective. And since both sin and guilt are inherited, we are all of us imperfect, not only in the historical sense but in the contemporary sense as well.

That historical concept of the hero in Western civilization (and we are here concerned with its representation in literature) has provided the model for the hero in nearly all our art. As for the mass of literature centering around the symbolism of the Holy Grail, one must realize that it is enormous. It exists in a variety of languages, in both ancient and modern forms. A few modern examples: T. S. Eliot has used the Grail symbol in his poem *The Wasteland*. Raymond Chandler's detective, Philip Marlowe, is fashioned after the Knight-Hero, and we are introduced to this comparison on the opening page of his novel *The Big Sleep*. Dashiell Hammett's character, Sam Spade,

may be considered as an archetypal representation of the Knight-Hero, and the mythic representation of the Grail is now in the form of the Maltese Falcon. Hammett, however, gives a 20th-century-twist to the Grail quest. For when Sam Spade finally lays his hands on the Falcon, he discovers it to be a fake. The original is unobtainable. Sam Spade is as unsuccessful in the quest as Galahad had been.

The characterization of Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* breaks completely with this tradition of the hero. Roark is a representation of Man as an end in himself. Roark has not inherited the guilt of the historical past, or of the world in which he lives and works. He will not accept the view that an individual is to be regarded as a means to serve any purpose other than his own. Roark is not motivated by the ethical teachings of Christianity. He is motivated by his own originality. Roark's goal is to shape matter into utility and beauty, to transform chaos into form, repression into the release of his own creative energy. His characterization has generally been criticized in the literary press as a projection of egotism. But Roark's accomplishments could never have been achieved through mere egotism; mere egotism is simply a posture. Roark is always purposeful, his purpose informed by the originality of his vision.

The published reviews focusing upon the characterization of Howard Roark advance the conceit that Roark is open to criticism *because* of his unique virtues. *The Saturday Review* wrote:

Probably it was a mistake to make him a genius. . . . He is a supreme and unanswerable egotist, and he enunciates a theory of social, or anti-social, civilization, that of the unbridled individualist, the only fountainhead of progress. . . . There is a confusion of values here which is mirrored in Roark's own headlong egoism throughout the book. . . . Roark, and Miss Rand, leap into an abyss of conscienceless individualism. The point need not be argued further here. It is the flaw in Roark, who is a genius but not a great man.[8]

Considered against the background of my remarks on the traditional concept of the hero, I do not think these words deserve much comment. But if they need further rebuttal, a quotation from John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* will answer:

Our species is the only creative species, and it has only one creative instrument, the individual mind and spirit of a man. Nothing was ever created by two men. There are no good collaborations, whether in music, in art, in poetry, in mathematics, in philosophy. Once the miracle of

creation has taken place, the group can build and extend it, but the group never invents anything. The preciousness lies in the lonely mind of a man . . .

And this I believe: that the free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes, undirected. And this I must fight against: any idea, religion, or government which limits or destroys the individual. This is what I am and what I am about. I can understand why a system built on a pattern must try to destroy the free mind, for that is one thing which can by inspection destroy such a system. Surely I can understand this, and I hate it and I will fight against it to preserve the one thing that separates us from the uncreative beasts. If the glory can be killed, we are lost.[9]

Roark's "headlong egoism" is criticized further when that reviewer suggests Roark might have found an alternative: "Arrow-smith, we remember again, came out of his search with quite other conclusions, without having to embrace collectivism." [10] In *Arrowsmith*, by Sinclair Lewis, the alternative is provided in the form of withdrawal from society, or as one of the characters in the novel puts it: "It's a kind of mis'able return to monasteries." In order to find the privacy to do his work, Martin Arrowsmith leaves his wife and child, his job, and goes to live in a remote cabin in Vermont. With a scientific colleague, he pursues his experiments in bacteriological research; Arrowsmith has rejected the world. This is not the alternative Howard Roark would choose.

CONTEMPT FOR CHARACTERS?

Architectural Forum wrote: "[Miss Rand's] contempt for people . . . is appalling in its fanatical intensity, and to match it one has to return to *Mein Kampf* . . . Millions live for the comics, and perhaps an appreciable percentage will go for *The Fountainhead*." [11] This reviewer, as far as I can determine, is the first to have the doubtful distinction of comparing Rand's work to Hitler. (I shall comment on that comparison in the section dealing with *Atlas Shrugged*.)

Diana Trilling, writing in *The Nation*, would have us see the characterizations in *The Fountainhead* on the level of the comics:

Roark . . . is a giant among men, ten feet tall and with flaming hair, Genius on a scale that makes the good old Broadway version of art-in-a-beret look like Fra Angelico. And surrounding Howard Roark there is a

whole galaxy of lesser monsters—Gail Wynand, who is Power, and Peter Keating, who is Success, and Dominique, who is Woman. When Genius meets Woman, it isn't the earth that rocks, but steel girders. Surely *The Fountainhead* is the curiosity of the year, and anyone who is taken in by it deserves a stern lecture on paper-rationing.[12]

Nora Ephron writes in much the same manner.[13] Such writers would have us visualize the characters in *The Fountainhead* as one-dimensional, drawn in a style of pictorial burlesque, with balloons floating over their heads as a substitute for dialogue. This might appeal to those who think in only the most simplistic terms, who can visualize abstractions only as distorted particulars (and miss the larger dimensions of meaning), or to those who are intent on mischief-making. I suspect the worst. This method (if it can be called method) lacks the honesty of literary criticism. Like gossip, it turns on exaggeration and draws its conclusions from exaggeration. Moreover, this kind of writing is demonstrative; the writer wants to demonstrate to his readers his own wit and cunning, usually at the expense of the subject. The attitude of the writer seems to say: "You aren't really going to take this seriously, are you?"

In analyzing the character of Peter Keating in *The Fountainhead*, Hazel Barnes argues that Keating is not an example of the altruist. She says: "Rand, of course, argues that such mistaken self-seeking [as Peter Keating's] is the inevitable result of altruism because of the inherent falsity of the doctrine. But the cynical use of altruism as a cover by her villains is in no way an application of the doctrine, not even a mistaken one. What motivates Peter Keating is not the desire to win the approval of others because he can't live up to Christian (or Utilitarian) command to sacrifice himself to the good of others." [14]

There may be some confusion here, not only in Barnes' implied definition of altruism (and which she argues Keating is not an example of), but also in her failure to account for the dual nature of altruism. Keating may be an altruist in the nominal sense; that is, he may not be a purist in his altruism but the results are still the same. He can perhaps be better described as both nominalist and pragmatist in his altruism. Keating will give of himself when it is pragmatic to do so. On the other hand, Keating will take when it is pragmatic to do so. If he does not act as purist, that will not alter the consequences of the act. The duality of altruism involves both giving and taking. A person who is expectant, even in the pragmatic sense, and counts on receiving the unearned, may be said to countenance altruism, to practice it passively, as it were, in

the transactional sense, as receiver, not giver. Keating is expectant of Ellsworth Toohey. Keating is expectant of Howard Roark. Keating is not aware, however, of the convolutions implicit in altruism, nor of the possible consequences. Thus when Toohey demands of Keating, "Who designed Cortlandt Homes?" Keating is totally confounded and demoralized.

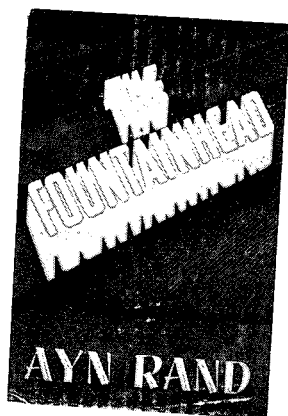
Keating's dilemma at this point may be seen as a consequence of his actions. Others had shaped his convictions. Others had provided his motivation. In that sense he had existed for others, not himself. Finally, he had copied the work and values of others, who, like himself, lacked originality, and had sought self-esteem through the approval of others. He had regarded Toohey and Roark as a means to his ends, and conversely had been willing to serve as means to the ends of others. The further consequences of his actions have left him with a lack of authentic self-esteem, and a general disillusionment in his attitude toward others.

Ms. Barnes further argues that the cynical use of altruism "as a cover by [Rand's] villains is in no way an application of the doctrine, not even a mistaken one." Barnes has a purist's view of altruism; she fails to recognize its pragmatic aspects, and she fails to see the cause and effect relationship of altruism in the real-world sense. Ellsworth Toohey's appeals are based in the ethics of altruism (what else?) and they are the means to his ends. Toohey is aware of the nature of altruism and if he uses it cynically, in the exploitative sense, it makes him a more consummate villain. Barnes would have him a purist, or so it would appear, and I think the root of her complaint is that she cannot reconcile villainy with altruism. Rand, of course, never intended Toohey as a purist.

Ms. Barnes does not mention Ellsworth Toohey by name, nor do any of the reviews of *The Fountainhead*, with but one exception. It is curious to consider that omission, especially when we realize it is the character of Roark that has been singled out for criticism. It is as though the roles of hero and villain had been reversed, with Roark the specific villain, and Toohey the nameless hero. Roark is the target of the reviewers: he is identified as the "unbridled individualist," "the unanswerable egotist," etc.

The one exception is Lorine Pruette's review in *The New York Times*:

Ellsworth Toohey is a brilliant personification of a modern devil. Aiming at a society that shall be 'an average drawn upon zeros,' he knows exactly why he corrupts Peter Keating and explains his methods to the ruined and desolate young man in a passage that is a pyrotechnical display of the fascist mind at its best and worst: the use of the ideal of



altruism to destroy personal integrity, the use of humor and tolerance to destroy all standards, the use of sacrifice to enslave.[15]

Ms. Pruette's review was the only one to describe *The Fountainhead* as a novel of ideas. As far as I have been able to determine, she is the only reviewer who correctly identified the ideas dramatized in the novel, who saw Roark as a new model for the hero in literature, and the only one to recognize the characters as representations of romantic literature.

ATLAS SHRUGGED

The symbol of the dollar sign dominated *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). Critics have sensed that in a world structured upon Randian values the dollar sign would supersede the cross. Hazel Barnes is perhaps the most astute of Rand's critics in this respect. But while in partial agreement with Rand on the inadequacy of the cross as a symbol of human aspirations, Barnes rejects the dollar sign as its successor: "I do not think we will improve things by replacing it [the cross] with the dollar sign. That is all too good an emblem for Objectivism, suggesting that happiness is for those who have the wherewithal to pay and in the currency set by those who are in power. Existentialism seeks something less subject to the arbitrary whims of the market." [16]

John Galt explicitly defines the dollar sign as the symbol of free trade and free minds. Historically, the origin of the dollar, in the metaphorical sense, is the origin of an objective value. Prior to 1792, the United States had no circulating exchange it could call its own (other than the discredited Continental dollar). A vast amount of foreign money, minted in Europe, still circulated in the United States. The Colonies had issued their own coinage but it was not uniform in value. In 1792, under authority of the Mint Act, the first mint was established at Philadelphia. The purpose of the mint was to issue a coinage of gold, silver, and copper based on an *objective standard of value*. Where previously there had been widespread confusion of money values, and no objective referent to value, the dollar became

the monetary unit of the United States. With that background in mind, the dollar sign in *Atlas Shrugged* can clearly be seen as the symbolic equivalent of an *objective standard of value*.

The coinage of the European mints, as far back as ancient Rome, was designed with the portraits of Emperors and Kings, Popes and Saints. The United States dollar, as far as I have been able to determine, was the first money to represent the concept of Liberty. The Congress had originally wanted the portrait of George Washington on the first dollars, but Washington, rejecting the tradition of European coinage, had declined. The earliest dollars minted at the Philadelphia mint depict Liberty as female, almost goddess-like, in sharp profile and with long, flowing tresses, the word "Liberty" circumscribed by stars above her head. The Mint Act of 1792 had specified that the dollar bear "an impression emblematic of Liberty."

What objective standard of value does the cross represent? As Miss Barnes has said, the cross is an ambivalent symbol. But more than that, it is a symbol of suffering and self-sacrifice, of redemption based on the notion of mystical salvation. It suggests that the only reward for life on this earth is suffering, and that deliverance is possible only through suffering and death.

There is no suggestion of liberty or freedom in the symbol of the cross. If any connotation of liberty or freedom can be derived out of the cross it is in the salvation or redemption that comes after death. And this can be understood only in the mystical sense, or in the sense of the supernatural. Considered in the literal sense, the crucifixion represents the exact opposite of liberty.

I have endeavored to point out that the dollar sign in *Atlas Shrugged* does not stand for the "arbitrary whims of the market," as Ms. Barnes has put it, but rather as symbolizing an objective standard of value and the condition of liberty that is synonymous with such a standard. I have not dwelt on this matter merely to dispute Barnes. Rather my intention has been to provide a key to the understanding of *Atlas Shrugged*. The contrasting symbolism of the dollar sign and the cross, in its larger sense, should be seen as a contrasting of two moralities. The morality of the historical world is represented by the cross. The morality of a new and better world is represented by the dollar sign. The consequences of the old morality are dramatized in *Atlas Shrugged*; the civilized world is in decline, reckoning or judgment is at hand. But the possibilities of a new morality exist, based on the premise of a rational universe, with rational Man considered as first cause and prime mover. Where *The Fountainhead* dramatized the concept of a new hero, *Atlas Shrugged* dramatizes the concept of a new

morality.

CENSORIAL ATTACKS

Probably no novel has challenged so many conceits of knowledge as has *Atlas Shrugged*. For those who believe that it is possible to know ends in advance, and who hold those ends as the good, the novel is heresy. In the published reviews there is virtually no effort made to identify the ideas of the novel and, having identified them, debate them. What is substituted for critical analysis is misrepresentation and vituperation.

One form of misrepresentation says the novel is derivative of Nietzsche, another of Hitler. Another describes the book as an act of hate; still another suggests the ideas of the novel are madness, or that if followed, will lead to madness. These misrepresentations, in one form or another, will be found scattered among the reviews. (There are one or two exceptions, I am happy to say.) If a consensus of attitudes can be found in most of these reviews, it will include one or more misrepresentations. And if there is an overriding consideration or attitude to be discerned among these misrepresentations, the one thing most have in common, I think it can be described as *censorial*.

The Nietzschean tag is a subterfuge used to discredit the novel. Throughout the reviews one encounters the words "Superman," "will to power," "*Übermensch*," etc. *Time* wrote: "Is it Superman—in the comic strip or the Nietzschean version?" [17] *The San Francisco Examiner* said: "But there is an even stronger resemblance in her work to Nietzsche's notion of the superman. And, like his books, hers fascinates with its imagination, melodrama, and the long-winded, often preposterous exaggerations with which she says things." [18] *The National Review* equates the Nietzschean superman with an "elite of technocrats," and concludes that it "can only lead into a dictatorship, however benign, living and acting beyond good and evil . . ." [19]

The Nietzschean association with *Atlas Shrugged* is patently false. The *Übermensch*, in Nietzsche's terms, is beyond morality, or more precisely, beyond good and evil. Rand's heroes are motivated by a rational morality, not irrational whims. The will to power, according to Nietzsche, is of the blood, of intuition and instinct. The morality of *Atlas Shrugged* is of the mind. Nietzsche represents the subjectivist theory of ethics. *Atlas Shrugged* represents an objective theory of ethics.

The Chicago Sunday Tribune complained of Rand's attack on mysticism and stated that her ideas of mysticism "seem derived of Hitler rather than Meister Eckhart or Rufus Jones. For her a mystic is a parasite in spirit and in matter, 'a man who surrendered his mind at its first encounter with the minds of others.' No, Miss Rand, a mystic is a man who

insists upon using those areas of his mind which you block off." [20] The assertion here is that Hitler was not a mystic; the reviewer is also of the opinion that mysticism, in the sense of Eckhart or Jones, is desirable. But Hitler was a mystic. Any person who demands obedience from others, who imposes his whims upon others, and who seeks power over others, employing the means of faith and force, is unquestionably a mystic. And finally, when this reviewer refers to "those areas of the mind," we must take this to mean the subjective. Meister Eckhart presented a theory of philosophy based upon paradox, and Rufus Jones asserted that the revelations of Quakerism were rooted in a movement which took shape from the great current of mystical religion flowing out of the historical past. The *Tribune* reviewer would have us believe that Rand can be faulted for not exploring the subjective and the mystical, and that her novel is less human for it.

Having reached the conclusion that *Atlas Shrugged* is derivative of Nietzsche, and that Nietzsche is the equivalent of Hitler, Whittaker Chambers in the *National Review* proceeds to discuss what he considers the "dictatorial tone" of the novel:

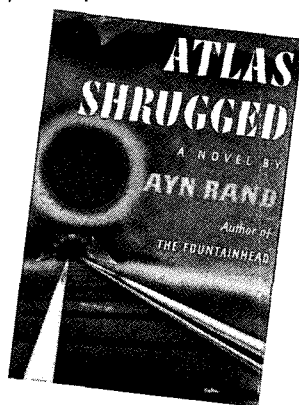
Out of a lifetime of reading, I can recall no other book in which a tone of overriding arrogance was so implacably sustained. . . . Therefore, resistance to the Message cannot be tolerated because disagreement can never be merely honest, prudent or just humanly fallible. Dissent from revelation so final (because, the author would say, so reasonable) can only be willfully wicked. There are ways of dealing with such wickedness, and, in fact, right reason itself enjoins them. From almost any page of *Atlas Shrugged*, a voice can be heard, from painful necessity, commanding: "To a gas chamber—go." [21]

The reference to the gas chamber is incredible and outrageous. That Chambers could have read the novel (how much of it could he have assimilated?) and completely missed Rand's repeated warnings against the use of force is no less incredible. Those words—"To a gas chamber—go"—are violent. They are not Rand's words; in no way do they represent her thought. Those words were written by Chambers. Whatever violence they express, and it is considerable, is of his doing, not Rand's.

Elsewhere Chambers states that Rand is not calling for a dictatorship, rather "an aristocracy of talents." But in the modern world, he continues, the preconditions of aristocracy no longer exist, and any contemporary impulse toward aristocracy must inevitably end in dictatorship. It is clearly a mistake for Chambers to say that

Rand advocates an aristocracy. Rand argues for individual ability, not class privilege. Rand argues for individual self-interest, not inherited position. Rand argues for individual freedom, not collective constraint.

One final comment on this matter. Rand has stated that the only way of changing people is through knowledge, and specifically through the means of rational persuasion. If people are not receptive to knowledge or persuasion, she continues, then they must be left to their position. Nowhere in *Atlas Shrugged* does she advocate force. On the contrary, she admonishes repeatedly against force. The mystic uses force. To the mystic, reason is deception. The mystic seeks to rule others, not to persuade others.



ACT OF HATE?

Having come by way of Nietzsche and Hitler, the next equivalency in the pattern of misrepresentation is to describe *Atlas Shrugged* in terms of hate. *Atlantic Monthly* described the novel as an "act of hatred," and in conclusion said: "What she [Rand] apparently fails to perceive is that the outlook which animates her book is an extreme expression of the aggressiveness and power worship which have been the Black Death of this century." [22] *Commonweal* wrote: "Miss Rand's book is hardly acceptable as a novel and her premise proceeds from hate." [23] *Saturday Review* charged: "The book is shot through with hatred." [24] Granville Hicks wrote in *The New York Times*: "It would be pointless to discuss either the logic or the feasibility of the program Miss Rand so vehemently puts forth. What is important is the spirit in which the book is written . . . it seems clear the book is written out of hate." [25]

Since Rand has so closely identified herself with her fictional heroes, and to the extent her heroes are representations of herself and her own sense of life, I think the best way to examine this charge is to consider a scene from *The Fountainhead*.

The scene is where Howard Roark and Ellsworth Toohey meet by chance one evening at the Stoddard Temple. Toohey has succeeded in blocking several of Roark's commissions. He feels a sense of

power over Roark. The Stoddard Temple has been converted into the Stoddard Home for Subnormal Children, and Roark's original design has been changed into an unrecognizable conglomerate. Toohey seeks to provoke Roark. He says: "Mr. Roark, we're alone here. Why don't you tell me what you think of me? In any words you wish. No one will hear us."

Toohey may have more than one motive in asking that question. But what he seeks most is to provoke a feeling of hate and outrage in Roark. Toohey waits expectantly for the reply, hoping Roark will become commonplace, lose his control, and perhaps shout, "I hate your guts, you sonofabitch!" Obviously such a reply from Roark would have pleased Toohey. Why? Because he would have undone Roark, diminished him as the exceptional man, and brought out the meanness, the frustration, the despair. Toohey would recognize that, even welcome it. Moreover, Toohey may be something of a masochist, seeking some kind of neurotic pleasure as the object of Roark's anticipated rage.

Roark simply replies, "But I don't think of you."

By doing none of the things Toohey anticipated, Roark retains his integrity. Roark does not hate. As Rand has put it herself: emotion is not a means of cognition. And this is the crux of the matter. *Atlas Shrugged* was not written from the premise that emotion (or hate) is a means to knowledge. If certain critics have failed to assimilate the ideas in the novel the problem may in fact be one involving the means of cognition, but I suggest it is *their* problem, not Rand's.

The final misrepresentation suggests that the ideas of the novel are madness, or will lead to madness. It represents the most distorted form of anti-Rand propaganda. Some examples: "lunatic flights of fancy," "crackbrained" (*Atlantic Monthly*); "madmen," "lunatic fringe," "paranoiac nonsense" (*New Leader*); "Perhaps most of us have moments when we feel that it might be nice if the whole human race, except for us and the few nice people we know, were wiped out; but one wonders about a person who sustains such a mood through the writing of 1,168 pages and some fourteen years of work" (*New York Times*.) Similar comments appear with regard to her other books. Of *For the New Intellectual*, *New Individualist Review* wrote: "The ludicrously mis-titled 'philosophy of Ayn Rand' is a sham. To those who are traveling her road I can only suggest its abandonment—for that way madness lies." [26] And *The New Republic* on *The Romantic Manifesto*: "egomania," "paranoia," "men in white coats," "neurotic babble," etc. [27]

Madness in literature, as the critic Yvor Winters has defined it, consists of a concern for the supra-human; it does not deal with human, that is, moral experi-

ence. Winters has further defined madness as obscurantism; that is, rooted in a process which substitutes obscurity for reason. As examples, Winters pointed to the linguistic convolutions of some psychological fiction (James Joyce), the mystical revelations found in some of Yeats' poetry, and a concern for the supernatural. Those interested in a superbly written essay on this subject should refer to his piece on Edgar Allen Poe.[28] There is no obscurity in *Atlas Shrugged*, no concern with spiritual revelation or the supernatural. On the contrary, the style and dramatization are explicit. It deals with human experience, and profoundly so. There is no philosophical provenance of madness; the philosophical antecedents are Aristotelian. As Yvor Winters would have put it, where is the *objective* evidence of madness? If some reviewers have construed madness in *Atlas Shrugged*, the problem again may be one of cognition, it may be one of intolerance, or both. In any event, no reviewer has legitimately delivered a critically informed judgment. What we have at best is simply impressionism, or worse, malicious gossip.

Perhaps some will say I am beating a dead horse: that criticism is an art and that book-reviewing is artifice. But I have not confused the two. Many of the reviewers of Rand's books have reputations as critics: Diana Trilling, Granville Hicks, Peter Michelson, to name a few. When we consider the progress that has been made in the critical method in the 20th century it is disturbing to note how little of that influence is reflected in the reviews of *Atlas Shrugged*. If I am laboring the point, it is because I expect something better, something more responsible. The *censorial tone* of these reviews is what I find most disturbing. This tone is rooted in a conceit of knowledge, and this conceit states, among other things: "The people's interest cannot be denied. . . . Her book cannot press down the flower of Christian concern for the humble and weak." [29] Those who hold it possible to know ends in advance regard the means as indoctrination, not free inquiry. It is through this peculiar commitment to indoctrination that the reviews of *Atlas Shrugged* derive their censorial tone.

THE ROMANTIC MANIFESTO

In *The Romantic Manifesto* (1969), Rand has discussed the esthetics of literature, with special emphasis upon Romanticism and the novel. The book was largely ignored by the literary press. Of three published reviews of which I am aware, two reviews will provide sufficient material for our discussion here.

The reviewer in *The Christian Science Monitor* [30] objected to Rand's comparison of Mickey Spillane with Thomas Wolfe; that is, the "objective" style of Spillane compared to the "subjective"

style of Wolfe. This reviewer apparently failed to understand that Rand is discussing *style*, or more precisely, the stylistic perception of reality in terms of the novel. As Rand explains, this involves matters of literary technique: point-of-view, dramatization, characterization, and dialogue. The so-called "hard-boiled" novelists of the 1930's and 1940's (James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, Horace McCoy, etc.) were, in a sense, trying to achieve the "objective" style. That school of writers sought to write the "objective novel" by employing certain techniques in a very specific way. They believed a close identification between hero (often anti-hero) and reader could be realized by having the hero act out, or dramatize, his role. That is, the author would not simply tell the story to the reader in the conventional way, in the sense of telling *about* a character; rather the character would tell the story to the reader by *acting it out*. The reader could expect comment and observation from the characters, but never from the author; the author would never intrude himself into the story.

I think this is close to Rand's position, as I understand it. I have referred to the "objective novel" of the hard-boiled school by way of illustration; the similarities are clearly there. The "objective novel," as its name implies, is oriented toward the objective world, not the subjective, and attempts to place characters and events within the flux of reality. But obviously such a method cannot remain independent of its author; in the final analysis it must remain as method. A novelist with an Existentialist view of the world can use the method to make value judgments consistent with Existentialism, much as Horace McCoy does in his novel *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* McCoy abused the method, it might be said, because he did not allow his characters freedom to act. They are doomed the moment the marathon dance begins, the dance itself seen as a moving symbol and microcosm of a mechanistic universe. On the other hand, where an author allows his characters freedom to act, and where they are permitted some degree of integrity and intelligence, the method can yield happier results.

As Rand has commented, Spillane's style is oriented toward reality, the objective world, and Wolfe's is toward the subjective world. The style of Spillane is factual or evidential; the style of Wolfe is declaratory or impressionistic. (I refer here to the early novels of Spillane; his recent work is of little merit.) Through his use of style a writer will reveal his personal evaluation of reality: it can be objective or factual, or it can be subjective and assertive. To put it another way: it can be either demonstrative (Aristotelian) or it can be declaratory (Platonic).

DELIBERATE MISREADING

The tone of Peter Michelson's review in *The New Republic* is clearly abusive: "Not to put too fine a point upon it, this is a crummy book. . . . What it comes to, in short, is that there is no intrinsic reason why this book should have been published." [31] Mr. Michelson cannot be accused of verbal paucity, for he attacks on all fronts, banners flying. The poverty of his criticism is revealed when we subject his arguments to analysis.

In her Introduction to *The Romantic Manifesto*, Rand refers to the cultural atmosphere of Romanticism and that period's "sense of life." It appears quite clear that Rand is speaking of esthetic matters, not political matters; she mentions Victor Hugo and Friedrich Schiller. Moreover, she says the cultural achievement of Romanticism was distinctly European, or of Western culture, *not* Russian. But Mr. Michelson has completely misunderstood:

'That period' refers to what Miss Rand recalls of her youth in Czarist Russia and its cultural shadow. 'As a child, I saw a glimpse of the pre-world War I world, the last afterglow of the most radiant cultural atmos-

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phere in human history . . . The original bright lights of that afterglow, of course, were Peter and Catherine, whose cultural union produced the operatic grandeur of mad Nicholas and his teddy bear Rasputin, and it surely was a shame that it all had to go just to lay some bread on a few peasants . . . [32]

One wonders at so deliberate a misreading. But there is more. Mr. Michelson tells us: "That someone of Ayn Rand's generation is running scared isn't surprising. They are, after all, being extinguished by the rhythms of life." Earlier, Mr. Michelson had compared Rand's "desperate posturing" to Spiro Agnew, "only on a vaguely more literate plane." That comparison, of course, deserves no comment. It is a whimsical association reflecting Mr. Michelson's view that presumably everything in life, even esthetics, should be seen through a political lens. And precisely what, we may ask, are the "rhythms of life"? Are they "vibrations" of some kind? Are they a manifestation of some esoteric knowledge, such as Yeats' cyclical theory of history? And just how can these "rhythms of life" extinguish anyone or anything?

Elsewhere Mr. Michelson argues against Rand's "bourgeois Myth of Happiness by the expedients of worshipping materialistic success." And he complains of her philosophic materialism. Mr. Michelson should realize that the foundation of existence, its basis in reality, is the material or the physical. All definitions and identities must proceed from a specificity. In the Randian value system, Man is first cause and prime mover, an end in himself. As human beings we cannot live in a disembodied state, or as abstraction, or to push it further still, as fantasy.

Mr. Michelson accuses Rand of a "monumental ignorance" of Naturalism, "especially her ignorance of its moral and ethical meaning." He then proceeds to tell us that Naturalism affirms human values, and that human values have been betrayed by "such 'noble' social institutions as war and capital, institutions designed for anti-human ends." Apparently Mr. Michelson has forgotten his textbook definitions of Naturalism or has conveniently chosen to ignore them. Parrington and others have defined Naturalism, and their definitions are not inconsistent with Rand's: (1) Man is fated by a deterministic universe and possesses little or no free will; (2) Man is a victim of his environment; (3) Man is a victim of his biological inheritance, etc. Mr. Michelson has accomplished little by changing the definitions of Naturalism. Even if we accept his arbitrary definition we will discover that those Naturalists who seek to moderate the harshness of Naturalism with Humanism arrive essentially at the same end. They may evoke a

greater sense of tragedy perhaps, but the best response that can be expected of us as readers and critics is one of pity: Man as an object of pity. Graham Greene has shown us that men, even gentle men, men peaceful by nature, are corrupted by pity. Pity, in Greene's terms, is a dangerous human weakness and a disguised form of contempt for others, a way of regarding oneself as superior to others.

Mr. Michelson proposes alternatives to the "solipsism" he finds in *The Romantic Manifesto*: "Humanistically, we're in a primitive state. To see us through what must be seen through we shall need generosity and humility of spirit. We shall need knowledge and responsible intelligence. We shall, above all, need good will . . ." This from a writer whose language is abusive, who uses a galaxy of pejorative words and phrases to depreciate Ms. Rand: "neurotic," "babble," "incoherence," "men in white coats," "paranoia," "egomania," "This is a crummy book," etc. What are we to think of a writer who proposes good will and then displays none? What are we to think of a writer who speaks of responsibility and then uses language so recklessly?

MODERN MEDIOCRITIES

The critic Yvor Winters has described Professor X (a purely fictional representation of the mediocre academic mind) as a person lacking in critical intelligence. Winters says:

Professor X, insofar as he may be said to have moral motion, moves in the direction indicated by Emerson, but only to the extent of indulging in a kind of genteel sentimentality. . . . His position is that of the dilettante: the nearest thing he has to a positive philosophy is something to which he would never dare commit himself; that which keeps him in order is a set of social proprieties which he neither understands nor approves. In a world of atomic bombs, power politics, and experts in international knavery, he has little to guide him and he offers extremely precarious guidance to others; yet by profession he is a searcher for truth and guide to the young. [33]

It might be added that those critics, like Professor X, who live in perpetual compromise with endowed superstition will find it difficult, if not impossible, to appraise the original performance of a great innovator, whose creative work begins where their capacity for appreciation ends. There is a story of what Dante said at the Court of Signor della Scalla, sovereign of Verona. "I wonder," the sovereign said to Dante, "that a man as learned as you should be hated by all my Court, and that this fool should be so loved." To

which Dante replied, "Your Excellency would not wonder at all if you were to understand that we like best those who most resemble us."

Yet there is another aspect to the problem, one not so easily answered. What motivates a critic or reviewer to commit such distortions, and to such excess, even to the point of maligning the character of another person? Perhaps the answer to that question can best be understood by answering it with another question, turning again to *The Fountainhead* for our example.

The question and the answer, put simply, is this: Why did Ellsworth Toohey seek to suppress the genius of Howard Roark? □

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ON SAVING DINOSAURS

The recent request of Pan American World Airways for a massive government subsidy serves to illustrate much about the role of government in today's economy.

To fully appreciate the situation, consider first the magnitude of the subsidy Pan Am has requested from the CAB. As bureaucracies go, the CAB is a relative piker. Its annual operating budget is \$17 million and it dispenses, in addition, some \$63 million in subsidies to local service carriers (Frontier, Piedmont, etc.). What Pan Am wants is a lump sum payment of \$194 million and an indefinite subsidy of \$10.2 million per month, retroactive to last April. In other words, if the subsidy were to begin this November, Pan Am would get an initial payment of \$265.4 million (over four times the CAB's current subsidy budget), plus \$122.4 million per year!

Depending on the government is nothing new for Pan Am, though. From its inception, founder Juan Terry Trippe saw Pan Am as a government-protected monopoly and lobbied successfully in the 1930's and 1940's to maintain that status. Pan Am, modeled after Europe's State-owned airlines, was to be the U.S. "flag carrier," the "chosen instrument" of U.S. overseas aviation policy. In exchange for protected monopoly status, Pan Am would show the U.S. flag in Asian and African backwaters where frequent air service was uneconomical, making up losses from its profits on lucrative routes like the North Atlantic, and would also forego competing with other U.S. airlines for domestic routes.

This policy worked fine for Pan Am until the explosive growth of air travel in the 1950's. Then TWA managed to breach the "chosen instrument" policy to become the second U.S. flag carrier and Pan Am's principal overseas competitor. Service in the prime North Atlantic market multiplied to include 45 other airlines, 21 of which (like Pan Am and TWA) joined the government-endorsed price-fixing cartel, the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The IATA members are nearly all government-owned flag carriers, many of them subsidized as a matter of national prestige. The non-IATA carriers are mostly nonscheduled charter airlines, which fly only when they book a full load, and at fares 30 to 50 percent less

than IATA coach fares.

Pan Am (and to a lesser extent TWA) claims it needs subsidy because (1) there is "overcapacity" in the North Atlantic market, (2) fuel prices have nearly doubled, and (3) its chief competitors (except TWA) are subsidized by their governments. Thus, claims Pan Am, it is impossible for it to continue to operate profitably and must be subsidized to remain in existence. Pan Am's argument raises two basic questions: *could* Pan Am conceivably be a profitable operation without subsidy, and *should* U.S. taxpayers be forced to keep it in business at a loss?

In fact, it is quite possible for a private, nonsubsidized airline business to make money in the "overcrowded" North Atlantic market. The nonscheduled charter operators are making money, by offering a type of service that allows them to fill their planes, rather than flying them half empty. And two non-IATA airlines offer frequent, *scheduled* service with modern equipment: Icelandic which has been flying from New York and Chicago to Luxembourg since 1958, and International Air Bahama which flies from Nassau to Luxembourg. As non-IATA airlines, both compete on price and service, and generate as much business as they can handle.

Two other companies have been systematically thwarted by the U.S. government in their attempts to provide low-cost, scheduled trans-atlantic service. Since 1971 Laker Airways, Ltd. has been seeking CAB approval to inaugurate its DC-10 Skytrain service between New York and London. As originally proposed, Skytrain would be similar to Eastern's Air Shuttle: no reservations, tickets sold only at the airport within six hours of departure time, all coach seating, no free meals, and cash only. The price? About \$80 one-way compared with the \$290 IATA fare! Skytrain was approved by the British government in 1972, but to begin service, Laker must obtain approval of the CAB and the U.S. President. Although the 1946 Bermuda Agreement *requires* U.S. approval, neither the CAB nor the President has acted, for two full years.

A similar fate befell Air Europe International, a company which planned to provide scheduled DC-10 service between

Tijuana and Luxembourg (safely outside CAB jurisdiction), thereby providing West Coast residents with the same type of low-cost service easterners have enjoyed for years on International Air Bahama. Air Europe planned a \$419 one-way fare, compared with the \$1042 IATA fare. Permission of both Luxembourg and Mexico was obtained last May, but despite the fact that those countries and the U.S. are all signatories of the 1944 International Air Services Transit Agreement which provides for automatic overflight and fuel stop rights (which Air Europe's service required), the CAB has managed to quash the planned September 2 start of service. How? By means of a campaign of news leaks, public disparagement of Air Europe as a "pirate" operation, pressure on the British Embassy (the planes and crews were to be obtained from British Laker Airways), and unattributed threats (including talk about boarding the inaugural flight with U.S. marshals).

The point, simply, is this. It is possible to make money in the international airline business, by doing innovative thinking to provide the types of services people want, at prices they can afford. The creaky old IATA cartel, however, is totally unresponsive to the marketplace, having raised fares 24 percent since last December, with another 10 percent increase going into effect November 1. The naked political power of the State, even to the extent of defying the law, is being used to prop up the cartel and forcibly prevent new competition. Pan Am's management, unused to the perils of the free market, has thrown its lot with the cartel, and therefore with the State.

Thus we come to the question: should the taxpayers be forced to subsidize Pan Am? Or, restated, should airline customers (and noncustomers) be forced to preserve a dinosaur that has outlived its usefulness, and thereby help maintain a system that forces them to pay twice what they need to for air service? The question is ludicrous. Those—like Pan Am—that choose to live by the State, should be allowed to die by the Market.

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