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Programa de Doctorat en Llengües, Literatures i Cultures
i les seues Aplicacions



Ayn Rand's Fiction and the Shaping of Modern American Individualism

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València, 2017

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Por tanto, para obtener la mención de Doctor Internacional, el doctorando ha realizado una estancia de 3 meses de duración fuera de España en la **Universidad de Bologna** (Italia), realizando trabajos de investigación. Dicha estancia y demás actividades han sido avaladas por la **Dra. Elena Lamberti**, profesora de Literatura y Cultura Norteamericanas en esta institución, y autorizadas por la Comisión Académica responsable del programa de Doctorado, incorporándose al expediente y al documento de actividades del doctorando.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. I give my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. José Ramón Belda Medina, Dr. Fernando Feliu-Moggi, and Dr. Elena Lamberti from whom I have learned so much and whose passion and creativity have inspired me throughout my academic career. I send my deepest thanks to my mother, Pat, my father, Mark, and my brother, Nick, for their love, support, and encouragement over the years. In regard to this paper itself, I thank Dr. Yaron Brook for taking the time to lend his expertise on the subject, and I owe a special debt of gratitude to my two esteemed dissertation directors, Dr. María José Coperías and Dr. Carme Manuel, whose aid and guidance helped to make this work a reality.

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INTRODUCCIÓN

A lo largo de la historia, han surgido varios movimientos políticos y filosóficos, pero la gran mayoría no han perdurado. Sin embargo, algunos, como la democracia o el comunismo se popularizan y afectan al mundo entero. Aquí en los Estados Unidos, la nueva filosofía quizás más desafiante e inusual ha sido formada por la novelista, Ayn Rand. El punto de vista de Rand sigue siendo relativamente desconocido en América, pero si se arraigase, revolucionaría nuestras vidas.

Esta cita fue la introducción para la entrevista hecha a Ayn Rand en 1959 por el reportero legendario, Mike Wallace. En ese momento, la audiencia no podía comprender completamente la presciencia de Wallace, y hoy en día no se sabe bien el alcance de la fruición de esta declaración.

Aunque ella ya había publicado varias obras y tenía mucho éxito en Broadway como dramaturga, Rand no llegó a ser conocida por todos los Estados Unidos hasta la publicación de su novela, *El manantial*, en 1943. Debido en gran parte al hecho de que Rand no permitía que nadie editara sus obras de ninguna forma, el libro fue rechazado por doce editoriales antes de que, finalmente, Bobbs-Merrill lo quisiera publicar (Schleier 312). Los dos temas principales de *El manantial*, las posibles consecuencias si uno determina sus valores más importantes a través de las opiniones de otras personas en vez de sus propias facultades racionales y la prioridad del individuo a través de la proyección de un hombre ideal, resonaban con millones de lectores quien aún se identificaban con los valores tradicionales del individualismo americano y enfurecían a progresistas a los cuales no les gustaba el mensaje de un egoísmo agresivo. Popularizándose rápidamente por el boca a boca, el libro llegó a ser un best seller y la película basada en la novela, con Gary Cooper de protagonista, tuvo muy buena taquilla en 1949. Después de haber creado una base de seguidores leales a través del hábil entrelazamiento de su filosofía nueva con la historia del heroísmo individual en *El manantial*, a Rand se le concedió la licencia artística para llenar su próxima y última novela, *La rebelión de Atlas* (1957), con el didacticismo y mensajes moralizantes de

economía, ahora con su filosofía completamente desarrollada, que ella llamó el objetivismo. Aunque se hayan vendido consistentemente más copias de *Atlas* que *El manantial* a lo largo de las décadas, ambos libros siguen vendiendo cientos de miles de copias cada año y tienen amplia influencia práctica. Desde el año 2000, una combinación de un aumento del número de investigaciones académicas, un paralelismo llamativo entre hechos reales y los sucesos de sus novelas, y una desestigmatización de Rand ha provocado un boom en las ventas de todas sus obras, tanto en su ficción como sus escrituras sobre temas de actualidad y filosóficos. Las ventas combinadas de sus tres novelas y su novela corta pasaron 1.000.000 copias vendidas en 2009 por primera vez desde que fueron publicadas más de 50 años atrás, un logro que se repitió en 2012 (“‘Atlas Shrugged’ Sets a New Record”). En total, más de ocho millones de copias de *El manantial* han sido vendidas, y el total de ventas combinadas de todas sus obras supera 30 millones de copias (“Ayn Rand Hits a Million...Again!”). Más de un cuarto de siglo después de su muerte, este renacimiento de Rand le ha lanzado de nuevo al centro de atención y le ha transformado en una de las figuras más influyentes en la América contemporánea.

Aunque haya tenido un estatus prominente en la política y la economía desde los años 60, Rand se ha convertido gradualmente en la líder filosófica del Partido Republicano moderno. En 2010 y 2014, el partido celebró victorias electorales de gran alcance que les dio el control de un número histórico de gubernaturas y mayorías legislativas a nivel de estado. Además de su dominación reciente en elecciones estatales y locales, debido a la victoria de Donald Trump en 2016, ahora los Republicanos ocupan los puestos más importantes de todas las tres divisiones del gobierno federal estadounidense. Ningún partido ha tenido tanto poder a todos los niveles de los gobiernos americanos desde las victorias históricas de los Republicanos durante la Reconstrucción al final del siglo 19. Ahora que un solo partido tiene un poder tan inmenso, es especialmente digno de atención que todas las figuras principales del Partido Republicano admiten que han sido influidos e inspirados por la misma escritora/filósofa, Ayn Rand. Paul Ryan, el presidente de la Cámara de los Representantes y el ex-candidato para vicepresidente de los EEUU, ha dicho que Rand, más que cualquier otra persona, le inspiró a llegar a ser político, y Ryan regala una copia de *La rebelión de Atlas* como lectura obligatoria a todos sus empleados nuevos.

También, el juez conservador que ha permanecido más tiempo en su cargo en la Corte Suprema, Clarence Thomas, así como el nuevo Presidente Donald Trump han declarado públicamente que *El manantial* les ha servido como inspiración. Como ejemplo de la importancia que tiene Rand para Clarence Thomas, el juez organiza un evento en su casa cada verano para ver la versión película de *El manantial*. Es difícil comprender que una sola escritora, la cual publicó su última novela hace más de medio siglo, podría tener tanto impacto práctico moderno, pero es aún más difícil creer que su popularidad ubicua entre los líderes del Partido Republicano y la base de votantes conservadores siga creciendo mientras continúa siendo mayormente desconocida en la academia. Slavoj Žižek, filósofo y profesor en la Universidad de Ljubljana, describe este fenómeno:

La idea de Ayn Rand es de un egoísmo iluminado, sin compasión para otras personas, como individualista puro, capitalismo brutal. Entonces mientras intenta formular el núcleo duro de la ideología del capitalismo liberal, lo hace de una forma que da vergüenza. Ella es muy popular. Sus libros son, creo, segundos después de la Biblia y *Lo que el viento se llevó* de Margaret Mitchell en la lista de best sellers eternos. Pero nadie habla de ella públicamente aunque su influencia sea crucial. (“Žižek about Ayn Rand...”)

Aunque su influencia “crucial” fue en gran parte ignorada en la literatura académica por décadas, la reciente creación de una revista académica completamente dedicada al estudio de temas relacionados con Rand ha expandido exponencialmente la base de conocimiento sobre la autora.

The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies, establecida en 1999, ha publicado cientos de artículos escritos por intelectuales mundialmente conocidos sobre las obras y la influencia de Rand. Los artículos de esta revista han explorado temas como la biografía de Rand, su filosofía, y su literatura. Durante muchos años, se ha reconocido su influencia en los campos de economía y arquitectura, pero investigaciones recientes publicadas por *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* han demostrado que su impacto llega mucho más allá de estas áreas. Estos nuevos estudios han probado que ella afectaba profundamente a algunos de los escritores y empresarios más famosos del siglo 20,

incluso el co-creador de Spider-Man, Steve Ditko, el autor que ganó el Premio Nobel, John Steinbeck, y el emprendedor reconocido internacionalmente, Steve Jobs. Han investigado detalladamente muchos temas sobre Rand, pero aún quedan varios temas claves por analizar en profundidad.

Aunque Rand se consideraba una pensadora independiente sin una herencia filosófica, varios académicos han hablado de la conexión entre sus ideales y los de los fundadores de los Estados Unidos, lo cual ayuda a explicar su oposición al progresismo americano. Para dar un contexto al tema más profundo, esta tesis explica rigurosamente el lugar de Rand en el linaje de individualistas americanos y su posición dentro de la dicotomía política moderna americana. Esta tesis demostrará que Rand forma un eslabón esencial en la tradición de los individualistas americanos. Los objetivos de esta tradición fueron anunciados por Thomas Jefferson en la Declaración de Independencia y los principios han servido como una herramienta para líderes americanos durante cada momento crucial en la historia de los Estados Unidos. Estos valores fueron aceptados casi universalmente en la población americana hasta el final del siglo 19 cuando el movimiento progresista trajo de Europa una nueva forma de pensar opuesta que proponía un gobierno centralizado y poderoso, una visión del mundo más subjetiva, y una colectivización de los conceptos de la Ilustración con sobre los derechos individuales. Este movimiento dominaba la política americana durante la primera mitad del siglo veinte, pero existía sin una doctrina escrita hasta el manifiesto progresista llegó en 1971 en la forma del libro *Tratado para radicales* de Saul Alinsky. El manual de tácticas para organizar comunidades ha llegado a ser la herramienta más importante para las progenies políticas de Alinsky que incluyen el ex-presidente Barack Obama y la ex-Secretaria del Estado Hillary Clinton. De este modo se reconoce que los líderes filosóficos de los dos lados de la división política americana actual se murieron hace décadas, Ayn Rand del individualismo americano y Saul Alinsky del progresismo. Ahora esta división es bastante clara, pero hay un aspecto de la influencia de Rand que la hace aún más extraordinaria que la de Alinsky.

La influencia política vasta de Rand se desarrolló y continúa a mantenerse casi exclusivamente a través de su literatura de ficción y no de su revoltijo de escrituras filosóficas y de actualidad. La mayoría de académicos y comentaristas se han centrado

en las ideas filosóficas y económicas de Rand mientras han pasado por alto el hecho de que su popularidad comenzó y se mantiene con sus dos últimas novelas, “A muchas personas les gustan las novelas de Rand por sus orientaciones individualistas. ¿Pero a cuántas les gustan sus novelas solamente por ese motivo? ¿Habrían atraído una audiencia *Capitalismo: El ideal desconocido* o *La virtud del egoísmo* si no fuera por el éxito anterior de sus obras de ficción?” (Cox 19-20). A lo largo de la historia, es raro que obras de ficción lleguen a ser tan influyentes que inspiran un movimiento político en la superpotencia global. La influencia enorme de Rand ha sido bien documentada, pero las facetas de su ficción que explican su éxito y aclaran por qué ha funcionado tan bien como vehículo para comunicar su filosofía no han sido meticulosamente examinadas aún.

METODOLOGÍA Y OBJETIVOS

Esta tesis presentará una exposición amplia del alcance de la influencia de Rand y su posición dentro del linaje filosófico americano, y dará un análisis innovador de *El manantial* que disecciona los aspectos de la ficción de Rand que provocan una reacción tan profunda con lectores americanos. La naturaleza literaria, histórica, y filosófica de esta investigación presupone un método de investigación cualitativo. Se utilizará una estrategia pragmática, enfocando en el cambio y el mundo real. La recopilación de material se ha hecho a través de la observación, documentos, entrevistas, y análisis audiovisuales y de textos. El procedimiento consiste de un análisis de la historia de la filosofía estadounidense y un análisis literario de *El manantial* de Ayn Rand. Primero, debido a nuevas investigaciones académicas y novedades constantes en la política americana, las sucesivas secciones representan una compilación extensa y actual del enorme alcance de la influencia de Rand. Segundo, esta tesis analiza en detalle las raíces de la dicotomía moderna de la política americana y el lugar de Rand dentro de ella. Tercero, el aspecto más único de la ascensión de Rand será analizado en la última parte de esta tesis. La ficción de Rand ha sido un vehículo mucho más eficaz para la transmisión de su visión del mundo comparado con sus voluminosas publicaciones de filosofía y temas actualidad, y el último capítulo de esta tesis ofrece percepciones originales para explicar este fenómeno. Este meticuloso análisis literario demostrará que Rand diseñó conscientemente su ficción para que resonara con la población americana, tanto positivamente como negativamente dependiendo de las tendencias políticas de cada persona, explicará la conexión entre su teoría romántica del arte y la tradición del optimismo americano, y demostrará cómo muchas de sus técnicas literarias fueron utilizadas a propósito con la intención de atraer y convencer al público americano. Cada capítulo de esta tesis expondrá las bases filosóficas, culturales, sociopolíticas, y literarias necesarias para entender completamente por qué Rand construyó su ficción de esta forma, y cómo y por qué *El manantial* ha ocasionado una reacción tan fuerte con la población americana específicamente.

El primer capítulo (“La reputación de Ayn Rand dentro del mundo académico”) indagará en aquellos factores que provocan una relación de antagonismo mutuo entre

Rand y el mundo académico. Debido a la perpetuamente tensa relación de la autora con los que publican en la literatura académica, la parte de esta tesis que tradicionalmente se dedica al repaso de las previas investigaciones relacionadas con el tema debe abordar también por qué Rand ha sido apenas estudiada hasta hace tan poco tiempo. En las palabras del Doctor Andrew Hoberek, “No fue hace mucho tiempo que Ayn Rand, a pesar de su popularidad enorme en curso, era casi invisible dentro de la crítica e historia de la ficción americana del siglo XX, aunque esto ha empezado a cambiar” (33). Durante las extensas investigaciones para esta tesis, resultó extremadamente claro que, comparada con escritores contemporáneos con ventas y relevancia cultural parecidos a los de Rand, había relativamente pocas investigaciones académicas sobre ella hasta el final del siglo XX. Entonces, este capítulo presenta y analiza varias posibles explicaciones para este fenómeno. Primero, se puede encontrar los orígenes de la exclusión de la filosofía de Rand, el objetivismo, en la conversación filosófica actual en “la purificación de la filosofía” del siglo XVIII por historiadores alemanes que consideraban que se podía ignorar a la gran mayoría de mujeres filósofas porque decían que sus ideas eran religiosas o místicas y no poco filosóficas (O’Neill 186). Los críticos de Rand le marcaron efectivamente con este estereotipo cuando comparaban su filosofía con ideologías de cultos religiosos. Después de esta parte breve sobre el posible sexismo en el campo de filosofía, este capítulo inspecciona la abundancia de intelectuales con tendencias izquierdistas y su oposición a Rand y a las ideas que expone ella. Se refiere a estudios recientes que demuestran marcadas inclinaciones políticas entre profesores americanos registrados para votar, con diez profesores demócrata para cada republicano (Walters 1). Aunque una mayoría de estos intelectuales seguramente no ignoran a Rand conscientemente, es natural que sus investigaciones se concentren en temas que les interesen en vez de pasar su tiempo leyendo sobre una autora que les fastidia constantemente. Aparte de las tendencias progresistas dentro de academia, en este capítulo se examina algunas de las declaraciones e ideas más polémicas de Rand. Estas declaraciones sirven para dar más legitimidad al desdén de los intelectuales que están predispuestos a tener una aversión a Rand desde el inicio. Esta parte también nota que varias de sus obras de ficción, incluso *El manantial*, tienen escenas durante las cuales los protagonistas violan violentamente a las heroínas. Aunque quizás se podría decir que solo es una obra de ficción si no fueran

por sus múltiples discursos y ensayos que exponen la idea de que el papel psicológico de la mujer es el de la sacerdotisa que recibe su felicidad cuando adora a un héroe. Si se combina eso con su creencia en una virtud intrínseca de sociedades tecnológicamente avanzadas la cual ella usaba a veces para racionalizar las políticas asesinas hacia gente indígena o para justificar la presencia de los EEUU en el Oriente Medio y llegar a ser muy claro por qué profesores progresistas ignoraban a Rand durante décadas. El personaje de Gail Wynand explica esta idea en *El manantial*:

Nunca [me he sentido pequeño mirando al océano]. Ni a los planetas. Ni a las montañas. Ni al Gran Cañón. ¿Por qué haría eso? Cuando miro al océano, siento excelencia del hombre, pienso en la capacidad magnífica del hombre que creyó este barco para conquistar todo ese espacio insensato. Cuando miro a las montañas, pienso en túneles y dinamita. Cuando miro a los planetas, pienso en aviones...ese sentido particular de un éxtasis sagrado que los hombres dicen que experimentan en la contemplación de la naturaleza – nunca lo he recibido de la naturaleza, solo de...Edificios...Rascacielos...Que vengan a Nueva York, que estén de pie en la orilla del Hudson, miren y arrodíllense. (446)

Entonces este capítulo explicará cómo Rand fue casi completamente rechazada por la academia hasta 1999 cuando una revista académica con el propósito único de publicar investigaciones relacionadas con Rand fue establecida. *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* ha aumentado exponencialmente los conocimientos sobre la biografía de Rand, sus obras, y su alcance de influencia que sigue creciendo. Esta revista continúa a publicar investigaciones que tienen que actualizar constantemente debido al efecto del boom de Rand en el siglo XXI que ha causado un aumento precipito en su impacto artístico, cultural, y político.

El segundo capítulo (“El alcance de influencia”) es un análisis completo de la influencia de Rand en una variedad diversa de profesiones y disciplinas artísticas. Esta parte describirá cómo se ha documentado bien durante décadas su influencia en los campos de economía y arquitectura, empezando con su papel como mentor del Director de la Reserva Federal, Alan Greenspan, y las similitudes entre el personaje de Howard Roark en *El manantial* y el famoso arquitecto americano, Frank Lloyd Wright. Este

capítulo ilustrará cómo la reciente desestigmatización de Rand ha ayudado a muchas figuras importantes en el mundo de negocios, como Steve Jobs y Mark Cuban, a revelar cómo ella les ha inspirado. Además, esta parte mostrará cómo, ahora que su prominencia es reconocida públicamente, los críticos de Rand le usan mucho como estereotipo de los conservadores americanos. Se encuentran ejemplos de esto en varios de los programas más vistos de la historia de televisión como *South Park* y *Los Simpson*. Se presentarán nuevas investigaciones que han descubierto que Rand ha tenido una influencia mucho más amplia en el mundo artístico que se pensaba antes, incluso la influencia de autores famosos como Ira Levin y John Steinbeck. Además, se explicará cómo Rand ha inspirado a varios de los creadores del héroe moderno de los cómics como el co-creador de *Spider-Man*, Steve Ditko, y el escritor de *Sin City* y *300*, Frank Miller. Por último, este capítulo explicará en detalle su inmenso impacto en la política americana moderna, cómo ha llegado a ser la guía filosófica del Partido Republicano, y cómo su ficción ha inspirado profundamente a los republicanos más poderosos de las tres divisiones del gobierno federal estadounidense.

El tercer capítulo (“El individualismo americano versus el progresismo: La historia de la moderna dicotomía sociopolítica americana”) contextualizará el significativo lugar de Rand en la política moderna americana, exponiendo la historia de las dos dominantes y rivales filosofías políticas del país, el individualismo americano y el progresismo. Se refería a Rand a menudo como una filósofa única y solitaria, y ella reafirmaba este punto de vista cuando habitualmente decía que sus ideas eran originales e innovadoras. Sin embargo, esta parte demostrará que ella, en realidad, forma un eslabón importante en la larga cadena de la filosofía del individualismo americano que tiene sus raíces en las ideas de Aristóteles y que fue refinada por John Locke durante la Ilustración. Aunque durante la segunda mitad de su carrera ella aseguraba la originalidad de sus ideas, cosas que escribió en su diario mientras escribía *El manantial* prueban que, de verdad, estaba intentando concretizar los valores de los fundadores de los EEUU, “La democracia capitalista no tiene ninguna ideología. Es eso lo que tiene que aportar este libro” (*Journals* 86). Entonces para entender completamente la habilidad de Rand de conectar con la población americana a través de su ficción, uno tiene que saber la historia de la filosofía que ella quería defender. El tercer capítulo de esta tesis presentará una historia detallada del individualismo americano con un enfoque

específico en los principios sobre los derechos naturales del individuo escritos en la Declaración de Independencia y el papel crucial de este documento durante muchos de los momentos decisivos en la historia americana. Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, y Martin Luther King, Jr. han reiterado los objetivos de la Declaración de Independencia, y ellos dependían de esas palabras escritas por Thomas Jefferson durante sus luchas para la igualdad en la protección de los derechos de individuos en los Estados Unidos. Esta parte de la tesis mostrará por qué Rand, como asunto histórico, encaja en el linaje del individualismo americano. Entonces elaborará sobre los orígenes del rival al individualismo americano, el progresismo, que rechazó las bases filosóficas y políticas de los fundadores de los EEUU a favor de una noción colectivista de los derechos civiles y la centralización del poder del gobierno. Se explicará la historia de progresismo desde su nacimiento del marxismo durante las últimas décadas del siglo XIX a su dominación de la política americana durante el siglo XX, incluso el establecimiento del impuesto sobre la renta a nivel nacional por Woodrow Wilson y la implementación del sistema de bien estar por Franklin D. Roosevelt. Se prestará más atención al génesis del movimiento progresista moderno, codificado en el manifiesto de 1971, *Tratado para radicales*, escrito por el organizador político de Chicago, Saul Alinsky. Varios de los Demócratas más poderosos del siglo XXI han utilizado las tácticas de Alinsky, incluso el ex-Presidente Barack Obama y la ex-Secretaria del Estado Hillary Clinton. Este capítulo del origen de la aversión visceral que Rand sentía por filosofías colectivistas como el progresismo, una aversión que vino de sus experiencias en Rusia durante la Revolución Bolchevique. Durante los últimos meses de 1917, cuando Rand sólo tenía doce años, el nuevo régimen declaró que ella y su familia eran miembros de la burguesía y les expropiaron el piso y la farmacia de la familia para el uso público (Britting 12). Después de este episodio traumático, Rand echó la culpa no sólo a los Bolcheviques, sino generalmente en todas las filosofías colectivistas de la historia porque ella pensaba que eran estas ideas que influían a las multitudes de usar la violencia en contra de individuos para el bien de todos. El resto de su carrera revolvería alrededor de este asunto. Por último, el tercer capítulo explicará las complejidades de la moderna dicotomía política americana y la yuxtaposición de Rand y Alinsky como los líderes filosóficos de los dos movimientos, tomando en cuenta que la influencia política de Rand se deriva excepcionalmente de sus obras de ficción y no de manifiesto como en

los casos de Marx y Alinsky. Esta parte mostrará cómo la popularidad enorme entre la juventud americana de figuras progresistas como Bernie Sanders y Barack Obama combinada con la ubicuidad de entusiasmo por Rand entre los líderes del Partido Republicano prueba que esta época está en su momento naciente y llegará a definir la política americana en el siglo XXI.

Para comprender bien las ideas que Rand quería comunicar a través de su ficción, el cuarto capítulo (“El objetivismo de Rand”) presentará la filosofía que ella desarrolló durante la segunda mitad de su carrera y detallará su variedad filosófica que incluye la epistemología, la metafísica, el psicoanálisis, y la estética. Este capítulo explicará cómo Rand formulaba el objetivismo como la defensa moral para las ideas de los fundadores de los EEUU, como el capitalismo *laissez faire* y los derechos del individuo. Durante este proceso, Rand cambió la justificación de estos principios a un argumento racional y epistemológico en vez del concepto de los fundadores sobre los derechos como un regalo de Dios. Se dividirá este capítulo en dos partes y la primera será un contraste del colectivismo y el individualismo. En esta parte, se analizará las raíces del colectivismo moderno, examinando las filosofías de Karl Marx y su predecesor, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Además, se analizará las bases filosóficas del individualismo de Rand, y se hablará de las consecuencias prácticas de su tipo de individualismo. Este análisis incluirá su oposición al racismo durante la segregación, su defensa del aborto, y su apoyo del matrimonio gay cuarenta años antes de su legalización. En la segunda parte de este capítulo, se investigará la dicotomía entre el objetivismo y el subjetivismo, incluso un análisis de la oposición de Rand a Emmanuel Kant, y cómo la afinidad que sentía Rand por las ideas de Friedrich Nietzsche se amargaba mientras construía su propia forma de pensar. Esta parte detallará el impacto de las filosofías de Kant y Nietzsche en los eventos de los siglos XIX y XX, y presentará las opiniones de Rand sobre las consecuencias psicológicas del concepto de conocimiento *a priori* y el nihilismo. Este capítulo describirá también cómo Rand diseminaba su filosofía durante los años 60 y 70 a través de libros exhaustivos de filosofía como *La virtud del egoísmo* (1964), su teoría del arte, *El manifiesto romántico* (1969), varios periódicos que ella auto-publicaba como *The Objectivist Newsletter* (1962-1965), muchos discursos en los EEUU, y varias entrevistas televisadas con comentaristas famosos como Mike Wallace y Phil Donahue. Aunque estos métodos

fueron eficaces en ese momento, su representación de su hombre ideal en sus obras de ficción es lo que perdura décadas después.

El quinto y último capítulo (“*El manantial* de Ayn Rand como el arte de la ficción americana”) presentará ideas originales con la intención de explicar el aspecto más curioso de la influencia sociopolítica de Rand – que se deriva casi completamente de su ficción y no de sus obras extensas de filosofía y actualidad. Esta parte compilará el contenido de los capítulos previos para explicar cómo Rand utilizaba su conocimiento del individualismo americano y el progresismo para diseñar eficazmente su ficción, para resonar con la población americana y para transmitir sus ideas de una forma subconsciente y metafísica. Esta última parte describirá por qué *El manantial* fue elegido como enfoque de esta investigación en vez del otro best seller de Rand, *La rebelión de Atlas*. Dado que será un análisis de cómo Rand generaba su influencia práctica a través de su arte, se propondrá que *El manantial* es el ejemplo más puro de su propia teoría romántica del arte, mientras que *La rebelión de Atlas* no cumple con muchas de sus propias reglas literarias y, dado que el héroe sermonea tan descaradamente durante su discurso al clímax de la novela, muchos consideran que *Atlas* es mucho menos artístico y demasiado didáctico comparado con *El manantial*. Entonces esta parte demostrará cómo Rand construyó conscientemente *El manantial* – los temas, la imaginación, la caracterización – para resonar con la población americana específicamente, y lo hizo a través de la personificación de los ideales de individualismo americano en la proyección de su hombre ideal, Howard Roark. Esta parte explorará las similitudes entre la tradición americana de la mitificación de personajes históricos con cuentos fantásticos y la representación de Roark como un semidiós realístico. Mientras los americanos han cultivado una mitología colectiva engrandeciendo los hechos de sus héroes históricos como George Washington y Davy Crockett, el mundo ficticio de Rand es casi mimesis pero da giros improbables en la trama para que los hechos del protagonista se aproximan a un superhéroe. Esta parte explicará cómo esta técnica comunica las ideas de Rand a través del héroe porque los lectores se trasponen en el lugar del protagonista, subconscientemente absorbiendo sus valores, los mismos valores del individualismo americano que Rand quiere transmitir. Entonces este capítulo enfocará en cómo Rand usaba dialogo selectivo para crear un contraste entre su héroe estoico y su antagonista que nunca para de hablar. Este contraste está en paralelo con la

dicotomía americana entre la logocracia y la meritocracia. Se mostrará que, cuando Rand desarrolla el carácter del héroe a través de sus acciones, representa su antagonista principalmente a través de sus palabras, ella se refiere al valor americano del merito a través del trabajo duro mientras resuena con la desconfianza que los americanos sienten tradicionalmente por la verbosidad. Por último, esta parte examinará cómo el “sense of life” romántico de Rand se mezcla perfectamente con el culturalmente establecido optimismo americano. El Profesor C. Grant Loomis describe esta característica nacional que provocaba eventos como la fiebre de oro y el aterrizaje lunar, “El crecimiento del culto americano del asombro tenía mucha fuerza de voluntad y fuerte entusiasmo. Sin embargo, a lo largo del tiempo, el éxito de los improbables y los impensables dejaba una premonición persistente no reconocida de imposibilidades exitosas” (109). El estilo romántico de Rand, que representa el mundo no como es sino como ella piensa que debería ser, encaja perfectamente en la creencia americana de un mejor futuro en cualquier circunstancia. Este aspecto de sus escrituras muestra otra vez cómo construía eficazmente su ficción para atraer y comunicara con la población americana específicamente.

En un programa titulado Doctorado en Lenguas, Literaturas, Culturas y sus Aplicaciones, esta tesis demostrará cómo *El manantial* de Ayn Rand representa uno de los ejemplos más puros de cómo una obra de ficción puede tener una inmensa aplicación práctica. Intelectuales en las humanidades y las bellas artes tienen que justificar la utilidad de sus campos de estudio a menudo, y la influencia sociopolítica y cultural de esta novela es la prueba de la relevancia directa de la ficción en el mundo real no sólo a un nivel personal, al cual se refiere a menudo, sino también a un macro nivel. Lo siguiente presentará cómo Rand combinaba sus conocimientos de la historia, la cultura, y la filosofía del individualismo americano con sus habilidades narrativas que aprendió durante su tiempo en Hollywood para comunicar eficazmente sus ideales a través del medio de la novela.*

*References translated for this introduction by Dan Stanforth. All citations can be found in their original language in the succeeding sections.

INTRODUCTION

Down through history, various political and philosophical movements have sprung up, but most of them have died. Some, however, like Democracy or Communism take hold and affect the entire world. Here in the United States, perhaps the most challenging and unusual new philosophy has been forged by a novelist, Ayn Rand. Ms. Rand's point of view is still comparatively unknown in America, but if it ever did take hold it would revolutionize our lives.

This quote was the lead-in to a 1959 interview of Ayn Rand by legendary broadcaster, Mike Wallace. His prescience could not be fully understood by viewers at the time and the extent of the fruition of his statement is still unknown to many to this very day.

Though she had already been published repeatedly and was a successful Broadway playwright, Rand did not become a household name until she burst onto the national scene with her 1943 novel, *The Fountainhead*. Due in large part to the fact that Rand did not allow anyone to edit her work in any way, the book was rejected by twelve publishing houses before it was finally picked up by Bobbs-Merrill (Schleier 312). *The Fountainhead's* two main themes, the consequences of determining one's higher values through the opinions of others in lieu of using one's rational faculties and the primacy of the individual through the projection of the ideal man, struck a chord with millions of readers who still identified with the tradition values of American Individualism and outraged Progressives who were turned off by its militant egoism. Quickly spreading by word-of-mouth, the book became a bestseller and was transitioned to the big screen in 1949 with Gary Cooper as the leading man for the box office hit. Having built a loyal fan base with the skillful intertwining of her unrefined philosophy with the story of individual heroism in *The Fountainhead*, Rand was granted the license to fill her next and final novel, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), with the didacticism and preachy economics of her fully developed philosophy which she deemed Objectivism. Though *Atlas* has consistently outsold *The Fountainhead* over the decades, both books have enjoyed consistent success, remarkable staying power, and broad practical impact. Since the turn

of the century, a combination of increased scholarly inquiry, startling parallels between events in the novels and real-world occurrences, and a general destigmatization of Rand has led to a boom in sales of all of her writings, both fiction and non-fiction. Combined sales of her three novels and her novella broke the 1,000,000 copy mark in 2009 for the first time since their publication more than fifty years earlier, a feat that would be repeated in 2012 (“‘Atlas Shrugged’ Sets a New Record”). That brings the overall sales of *The Fountainhead* to more than 8 million copies, and the total combined sales of all her works to more than 30 million copies (“Ayn Rand Hits a Million...Again!"). More than a quarter century after her passing, this Rand renaissance has catapulted her back into the limelight and has transformed her into one of the most influential figures in contemporary America.

Having held a prominent status in politics and economics since the 1960's, Rand has gradually evolved into the philosophical figurehead of the modern Republican party. In 2010 and 2014, the party celebrated sweeping electoral victories that gave them control of a historic number of governorships and legislative majorities at the state level. On top of their recent dominance in state and local elections, due to the election of Donald Trump in 2016, Republicans now occupy the top posts in all three branches of the United States' federal government, as well. This amount of power across the board has not been held by party since the landslide wins of the Republicans during Reconstruction in the late nineteenth century. With one party now commanding such immense authority, it is especially noteworthy that all of these top Republican officials acknowledge that they have been influenced and inspired by the same writer/philosopher, Ayn Rand. Speaker of the House of Representatives and former candidate for Vice President, Paul Ryan, has said that Rand, more than anyone else, led him to become a public servant, and Ryan hands out *Atlas Shrugged* as mandatory reading for all of his new staff members. In addition, the longest serving conservative jurist on the Supreme Court, Justice Clarence Thomas, as well as the newly elected President Trump have both stated publicly that *The Fountainhead* has served as inspiration for them. Justice Thomas even holds a viewing of *The Fountainhead* film at his home each summer. It is difficult to comprehend that one writer whose last novel was published over a half century ago would have such contemporary practical impact, but it is even harder to believe that her ubiquitous popularity amongst Republican

leadership and the conservative voter base continues to grow while staying under the radar of many in academia. Leading philosopher and professor at the University of Ljubljana, Slavoj Žižek, describes this phenomenon:

Ayn Rand's idea is an enlightened egotism, no compassion for others, like pure individualist, brutal capitalism. So while she tries to formulate the very hard core of the liberal capitalist ideology, she does it in such a way that she is an embarrassment. She is very popular. Her books are, I think, second after the Bible and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* on the list of eternal bestsellers. But nobody publicly refers to her although her influence is crucial. ("Žižek about Ayn Rand...")

Though her "crucial" influence went largely ignored in the scholarly literature for decades, the recent establishment of a journal devoted strictly to Rand related research has exponentially expanded the knowledge base about the author.

The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies, established in 1999, has shed light on Rand's work and her influence by publishing hundreds of articles by some of the top intellectuals in the world. Papers in this journal have explored topics such as Rand's biography, her philosophy, and her literature while also delving into her far-reaching influence, as well. Her sway in the fields of economics and architecture have been noted for years, but recent investigations by academics writing for *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* have proven that her mark reaches far beyond these areas. Fresh research by these leading thinkers shows that she had a profound effect on some of the famous writers and businessmen of the twentieth century including the co-creator of Spiderman, Steve Ditko, the Noble Prize winning author, John Steinbeck, and world-renowned entrepreneur, Steve Jobs. Though many such issues regarding Rand have now been examined in depth, several key subjects have yet to be fully analyzed.

Though Rand claimed to be an independent thinker without a philosophical inheritance, many scholars have addressed her connection to the ideals of the American Founding which also help to explain her opposition to American Progressivism. In order to give context to the deeper theme, this dissertation exhaustively explains her place in the American Individualist lineage and her position in the modern American political

dichotomy. This dissertation will demonstrate that Rand forms a pivotal link in the chain of the American Individualist tradition, the goals of which were announced by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence and the principles of which have served as essential tools for American leaders at every major turning point in American history. These values were almost universally accepted amongst the American people until the late nineteenth century when the Progressive movement brought with it an opposing mindset that called for a more powerful central government, a more subjective worldview, and a collectivization of the Enlightenment concepts regarding individual rights. This movement dominated American politics in the first half of the twentieth century, but it was without a true written doctrine until the Progressive manifesto arrived in 1971 in the form of Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*. Alinsky's tactical guide to community organizing has become the primary tool for his political progeny which includes former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Thus the two sides of the American political divide are now headed up by individuals who have long since passed, Ayn Rand of American Individualism and Saul Alinsky of Progressivism. Though the split is now quite clear, one aspect of Rand's influence makes it even more remarkable than that of Alinsky.

Rand's vast political influence has been spurred almost exclusively by her fictional literature and not by her smorgasbord of non-fiction, philosophical writings. Most scholars and commentators have focused on Rand's philosophy and economic leanings while they have overlooked the fact that her popularity started with and is maintained by her two novels, "Many people do like Rand's novels because of her individualist orientation. But how many like them solely for that reason? Would *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* or *The Virtue of Selfishness* have attracted any audience at all without the prior success of her fiction?" (Cox 19-20). Throughout history, it is rare that works of fiction become so hugely influential that they inspire a political movement in a leading global superpower. Rand's enormous influence has been well documented, but the facets of her fiction which give rise to its popularity and make it a more effective vehicle for the communication of her philosophy have not been thoroughly examined to this point.

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

This dissertation will present a comprehensive exposition of Rand's scope of influence and her place in the American philosophical landscape while delivering an innovative analysis of *The Fountainhead* that dissects the aspects of Rand's fiction that cause it to strike such a profound chord with American readers. The literary, historical, and philosophical nature of this dissertation presupposes a qualitative method of investigation. A pragmatic strategy will be employed, focusing on change and the real world. Sources used for this dissertation include first-hand observation and personal interviews as well as audiovisual and textual analysis. While particular attention was paid to primary sources, numerous literary criticism and academic journal articles were probed. First, due to new scholarship and constant developments in American politics, the succeeding sections represent an extensive and up-to-date compilation of Rand's broad scope of influence. Second, this dissertation gives an exhaustive look at the roots of the modern American political dichotomy and Rand's place therein. Third, the single most unique aspect of Rand's ascension will be analyzed in detail in the final portion of this dissertation. Rand's fiction has proved to be a more effective vehicle for conveying her worldview than her voluminous publications on current affairs and philosophy, and the last section of this dissertation offers original insights as to why this is true. This meticulous literary analysis will prove that Rand consciously designed her fiction to resonate with the American people, both positively and negatively depending on one's political leanings, will explain the connection between her Romantic theory of art and traditional American optimism, and will demonstrate how many of her literary techniques were employed in a deliberate attempt to attract and sway American audiences. Each chapter of this dissertation will lay out the philosophical, cultural, sociopolitical, and literary bases necessary to fully comprehend why Rand constructed her fiction as she did, as well as how and why the American people, specifically, have reacted so strongly to *The Fountainhead*.

Chapter One (“Ayn Rand’s Reputation in Academia”) will delve into the motivating factors that drive the mutually antagonistic relationship between Rand and the academy. Due to the author’s perpetually strained rapport with those who publish in the scholarly literature, the portion of this dissertation which is traditionally dedicated to a review of previous scholarship on the subject must also address why Rand was scarcely examined until recently. In the words of Dr. Andrew Hoberek, “It wasn’t too long ago that Ayn Rand, despite her enormous and ongoing popularity, was all but invisible in the criticism and history of twentieth-century American fiction, although that has begun to change” (33). During the extensive research for this dissertation, it became glaringly apparent that, compared to her contemporaries with similar sales figures and cultural relevance, Rand had been relatively under-researched for decades. Thus several possible explanations for this are presented and analyzed in detail in this section. First, the exclusion of Rand’s Objectivism from the contemporary philosophical discussion is traced back to the eighteenth century “purification of philosophy” by German historians who contended that most female philosophers could be disregarded as religious or mystical in nature (O’Neill 186). This stereotype was effectively branded onto Rand as critics likened her writings more to cults than to philosophy. Following this brief look at potential sexism in the field of philosophy, this chapter then inspects at length the abundance of left-leaning scholars and their opposition to Rand and the ideas which she espouses. Recent studies are referenced that show a marked political slant amongst American professors who are registered to vote, with Democrats outnumbering Republicans at a ratio of ten to one (Walters 1). Though most of these intellectuals surely do not consciously blackball Rand from their research, it is natural for many to focus their investigations on subjects which interest them most instead of spending too much time reading up on an author who constantly irks them. On top of a verifiable progressive bias in the academy, some of Rand’s more controversial statements and stances are dissected. Her declarations sometimes serve to legitimize the disdain for many intellectuals who were inherently predisposed to dislike her from the outset. This section notes that several of her works of fiction, including *The Fountainhead*, feature scenes in which the protagonist violently rapes the heroine. Though she may be given creative license in her fiction, she has stated her belief in multiple speeches and non-fiction essays that the psychological role of a woman is that of priestess who is happiest

when worshipping a male hero. Add that to her belief in the intrinsic virtue of technologically advanced societies which she used at times to rationalize the United States' murderous policies toward Native Americans or justify an American presence in the Middle East and it becomes clear why progressive professors disregarded her for decades. Her character Gail Wynand puts this notion on full display in *The Fountainhead*:

Never [have I felt small when looking at the ocean]. Nor looking at the planets. Nor at mountain peaks. Nor at the Grand Canyon. Why should I? When I look at the ocean, I feel the greatness of man, I think of man's magnificent capacity that created this ship to conquer all that senseless space. When I look at mountain peaks, I think of tunnels and dynamite. When I look at the planets, I think of airplanes...that particular sense of sacred rapture men say they experience in contemplating nature--I've never received it from nature, only from...Buildings...Skyscrapers...Let them come to New York, stand on the shore of the Hudson, look and kneel. (446)

This chapter will then explain how Rand was thus widely rejected by the academy until 1999 when an academic journal with the sole purpose of publishing Rand related research was established. *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* has led to an exponential broadening of the knowledge base regarding Rand's life, her work, and her expanding scope of influence. This journal continues to publish new investigations which must be continually updated due in large part to the effect of the twenty-first century Rand boom which has caused a precipitous increase in her artistic, cultural, and political impact.

Chapter Two ("Scope of Influence") will give a comprehensive look at Ayn Rand's influence on an incredibly diverse range of professions and artistic disciplines. This portion will cover how her mark in the fields of economics and architecture has been well documented for decades, dating back to her mentorship of the Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan, and her modeling of the character of Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* after the famed Frank Lloyd Wright. This chapter will then go on to illustrate how the recent destigmatization of Rand has allowed many important figures in business, like Steve Jobs and Mark Cuban, to reveal how she has inspired

them. Furthermore, it will show how this more publicly recognized prominence has led her critics to use her as their conservative foil, as one can see in repeated references of her in some of the longest running television series in history such as *South Park* and *The Simpsons*. New studies will be presented that have uncovered a much more significant artistic reach of Rand than previously thought, including influence on such renowned authors as Ira Levin and John Steinbeck, as well as her role in inspiring several of the creators of the modern comic book super hero such as *Spider-Man* co-creator, Steve Ditko, and the writer of *Sin City* and *300*, Frank Miller. Finally, this chapter will detail her immense impact on modern American politics, how she has gradually become the philosophical guide of the Republican Party, and how her fiction has profoundly touched the highest ranking Republicans of all three branches of the United States' federal government.

Chapter Three (“American Individualism vs. Progressivism: The History of the Modern American Sociopolitical Dichotomy”) will contextualize Rand’s significant place in contemporary American politics by providing a thorough history of the two dominant and rival schools of thought, American Individualism and Progressivism. Rand is often seen as a philosopher on an island of her own and she reinforced this viewpoint by habitually making assertions of her originality. However, this section will demonstrate that she actually forms a key link in a long chain of American Individualist philosophy that dates back to Aristotle and that was further refined by John Locke during the Enlightenment. Though in the latter half of her career she frequently claimed the uniqueness of her ideas, her journal entries at the time that she wrote *The Fountainhead* prove that she was really attempting to reaffirm the values of the American Founders, “Capitalistic democracy has no ideology. That is what the book has to give it” (*Journals* 86). Thus to fully understand Rand’s ability to connect with the American people through her fiction, one must know the history of the philosophy which she sought to defend. Chapter three will present a detailed history of American Individualism with a specific focus on the principles of natural individual rights laid out in the Declaration of Independence and the crucial role of this document during many of the pivotal turning points in American history. Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, and Martin Luther King, Jr. all harkened back to the goals put forth in the Declaration, and they relied upon the words of Thomas Jefferson in their fights for the equal

protection of individuals' rights in the United States. This portion of the dissertation will show why Rand, as a historical matter, fits into the lineage of American Individualism. It will then elaborate upon the origins of the rival American Individualism, Progressivism, which rejected the philosophical and political bases of the American Founding in favor of a collectivized notion of civil rights and a centralization of governmental power. The history of Progressivism will be detailed from its birth out of Marxism in the late nineteenth century to its domination of twentieth century American politics, including the establishment of the federal income tax by Woodrow Wilson and the implementation of the modern welfare state by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Specific attention will be paid to the genesis of the modern Progressive movement, codified in the 1971 manifesto, *Rules for Radicals*, by the Chicago community organizer, Saul Alinsky, whose tactics have been successfully employed by some of the most powerful Democrat politicians of the twenty-first century, namely former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. This section will also touch on the source of Rand's visceral aversion to collectivist philosophies like that of Progressivism which stems from her experiences in Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. In late 1917, when she was only twelve years old, the new regime deemed Rand and her family to be members of the bourgeoisie and seized for public use their family-owned pharmacy and their home in the flat above their business (Britting 12). She blamed this traumatic episode not only on the Bolsheviks, but more generally on any and all collectivist philosophies which she felt drove mobs to use violent force against individuals. The rest of her career would revolve around this issue. Finally, chapter three will explain the intricacies of the modern American political dichotomy and the juxtaposition of Rand and Alinsky as the philosophical figureheads of the two movements, noting that Rand's practical political influence is uniquely derived from her works of fiction and not from manifestos as in the cases of Marx and Alinsky. It will show how the enormous popularity of Progressive figures such as Bernie Sanders and Barack Obama amongst the American youth along with the ubiquity of Rand enthusiasts throughout the Republican leadership is proof that this dichotomy is in its nascent period and will come to define twenty-first century American politics.

In order to comprehend the ideas which Rand wished to communicate through her fiction, Chapter Four ("Rand's Objectivism") will provide a thorough understanding

of the philosophy that she developed during the second half of her career which covers a wide variety of philosophical sub-categories including epistemology, metaphysics, psychoanalysis, and aesthetics. This section will explain how Rand formulated Objectivism to become the moral defense for the ideals of the American Founding, like laissez faire capitalism and individual rights, while throwing aside the religiosity of the Founders' concept of God-given rights in favor of a rational, epistemological justification. This chapter will be broken down into two parts, the first of which will be Collectivism vs. Individualism. In this subsection, the roots of modern collectivism will be analyzed by examining the philosophies of Karl Marx and his predecessor, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Furthermore, the philosophical bases for Rand's individualism will be probed, and the practical consequences of her individualism will be delved into. This includes her staunch opposition to racism in the midst of segregation, her early support for the legalization of abortion, and her advocacy for the legalization of gay marriage more than forty years before its fruition. In the second part of this chapter, the dichotomy of Objectivism vs. Subjectivism will be investigated, including an analysis of Rand's scorn for Emmanuel Kant, and how her early affinity for the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche soured as she constructed her own belief system. This subsection will detail the impact of Kant and Nietzsche's philosophies on the events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and will give Rand's opinions on the psychological consequences of the concept of *a priori* knowledge and Nihilism. This chapter will also describe how Rand disseminated her philosophy throughout the 1960's and 70's by writing exhaustive books on philosophy such as *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964), penning her theory of art called *The Romantic Manifesto* (1969), publishing several periodicals including *The Objectivist Newsletter* (1962-65), giving speeches across the country, and sitting for many television interviews with reporters like Mike Wallace and talk show hosts such as Phil Donahue. Though these methods were effective at the time, her fictional portrayal of an ideal man is what endures decades later.

The fifth and final chapter (“*The Fountainhead* as Ayn Rand's Art of American Fiction”) will present original ideas that endeavor to explain the most curious aspect of Rand's sociopolitical influence – that it is almost wholly driven by her fiction and not her extensive works of non-fiction. This section will bring together the content of the

previous sections to explain how Rand utilized her knowledge of American Individualism and Progressivism to effectively design her fiction to resonate with the American people and communicate her ideas on a more subconscious, metaphysical level. This last portion will discuss why *The Fountainhead* was chosen as the subject of this investigation instead of Rand's bestseller, *Atlas Shrugged*. Since it will be an analysis of how she has generated practical influence through her art, it is argued that *The Fountainhead* is a purer example of her own Romantic theory of art, whereas *Atlas Shrugged* breaks many of her own literary rules and, given the blatant sermonizing in the form of an impromptu speech by the hero, it is widely considered to be less artistic than it is overtly didactic. Having explained why it is the focus of the study, this segment will demonstrate how Rand consciously constructed *The Fountainhead*, in its themes and imagery and characterization, to specifically strike a chord with the American people as she personifies American Individualist values in the projection of her ideal man, Howard Roark. This section will explore the similarities between the American tradition of turning real historical figures into heroes by mythologizing through tall tales and Rand's portrayal of Roark as a realistic demigod. While Americans have cultivated a collective mythology by aggrandizing historical figures like George Washington and Davy Crockett, Rand's fictional world approaches mimesis but turns improbably Romantic with Roark's superhuman drive to realize his dreams. This section will explain the how this technique of depicting a hero who could possibly exist in reality invites readers to transpose themselves onto the hero, subconsciously causing them to absorb his values, the values of American Individualism which Rand wishes to communicate. This chapter will then focus on how Rand's selective use of dialogue to create a contrast between her stoic hero and her long-winded villain plays into the American dichotomy of logocracy versus meritocracy. It will be shown that, by building her hero's character through his actions while presenting her villain primarily through his words, Rand taps into the American value of merit through hard work while also harnessing Americans' traditional distrust of verbosity. Finally, this section will examine how Rand's Romantic sense of life melds perfectly with culturally established American optimism. Professor C. Grant Loomis describes this national trait that led to such events as the gold rush and the moon landing, "The growth of the American cult of wonder had a good deal of prayerful hardihood and teeth-gritting cheerfulness. In time,

however, the success of improbables and imponderables left a lingering unacknowledged premonition of successful impossibilities” (109). Rand’s Romantic style, which portrays the world not as is it, but as she feels it should be, plays perfectly into the American belief a better tomorrow regardless of circumstances. This aspect of her writing shows yet again how she successfully constructed her fiction to draw in and communicate with an American audience specifically.

In a program entitled Doctorate in Languages, Literatures, Cultures and their Applications, this dissertation will demonstrate how Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead* is one of the purest examples of how a work of literary fiction can have an immense practical application. Scholars in the humanities and fine arts are often asked to justify the utility of their given fields, and the sociopolitical and cultural influence of this novel is proof of the direct real world relevance of fiction not only on a personal level, which is often cited, but on a macro scale, as well. The following will present how Rand combined her understanding of the history, culture, and philosophy of American Individualism with the storytelling skills she learned in Hollywood to effectively communicate her ideals through the medium of a novel.

CHAPTER 1

Ayn Rand's Reputation in Academia

Due in no small part to Ayn Rand's mutually antagonistic relationship with academia, she was widely ignored by scholarly journals for decades until her recent popular resurgence made it impossible to avoid more exhaustive intellectual inquiry. Prior to the turn of the century, numerous books and essays on Rand were published, articles were printed in newspapers and magazines, and the Ayn Rand Institute was established in 1985 by her legal heir, Leonard Peikoff, as a way of spreading her philosophy of Objectivism. Apart from the periodicals which she edited and published herself in the 60's and 70's, which cannot be considered an objective source of genuine critical analysis, there was nearly no mention of her in journals related to philosophy or literature. In the introduction to an infamous interview with *Playboy* magazine in 1964, this phenomenon is noted in reference to the release of her novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, seven years earlier, "Despite this success, the literary establishment considers her an outsider. Almost to a man, critics have either ignored or denounced the book" (cited in Golson 14). Until the Rand renaissance of the new century, instead of critically analyzing Rand and her works, the academic world opted to ignore her almost completely. Bruce Barry and Carroll U. Stephens make this cogent observation:

At a general level objectivism has no legitimate standing in the discipline of moral philosophy...Ayn Rand receives no mention whatsoever in several prominent contemporary compendia of philosophical thought, including *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Audi 1995), *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Blackburn 1994), and *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Honderich 1995). Although the abstract principle of ethical objectivism appears in some of these volumes, never is it framed in terms of or with any reference to Rand's writings. (163)

Aside from sparse references to her in journals of economics, architecture, and film studies during the 20th Century, the whitewash of Rand from scholarly sources continued to be the norm until the establishment of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies (JARS)*, an academic journal co-founded by Chris Matthew Sciabarra in 1999 and dedicated solely to Rand-related studies. Though passing mentions of her in scholarly literature from such a wide variety of fields demonstrate the extent of her impact across diverse fields of study, they also show that there has long been, at some level, a predisposed hostility toward Rand throughout much of academia. In their article “Critical Neglect of Ayn Rand’s Theory of Art,” Michelle Marder Kamhi and Louis Torres state that both philosophical prejudices and stylistic disagreements are to blame for the lack of Rand scholarship, “The reasons for this oversight are both external and internal, ranging from the ideological biases of the critical establishment to Rand’s idiosyncrasies of style and emphasis” (1). However, her skyrocketing sales numbers and expanding influence in recent years have provoked a flood of new scholarship from world-renowned thinkers. Though most of these articles have been published between the covers of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, the increased academic attention paid to Rand has brought about fresh and fascinating insights into her life, her works, and her place in contemporary America.

How is it possible that such an influential author whose work has endured for decades has been under-analyzed by academia for so long? The answer can surely be attributed to complex issues of sincere esthetic and philosophical disagreements for some, but for others it may boil down to simpler reasons, the first of which is sexism. On the question of gender bias in academia, Eileen O’Neill finds that a “purification of philosophy” expelled almost all women from the field in the late eighteenth century:

German historians, taking Kantianism as the culmination of early modern philosophy and as providing the project for all future philosophical inquiry... [so that] by the nineteenth century, much of the published material by women once deemed philosophical no longer seemed so... [because] the bulk of the women’s writings either directly addressed such topics as faith and revelation, on the one hand, or woman’s nature and her role in society, on the other. (186)

O'Neill goes on to state that, throughout the history of philosophy, women have not been taken seriously and instead were said to have been "motivated by religious concerns." With this in mind, it is particularly noteworthy that many of Rand's critics have similarly broken down her philosophy of Objectivism to the status of a second-rate cult. Though parallels can be drawn between the effects of religions and nearly any politically influential theory of philosophy, Rand is arguably the most consequential philosopher in modern history to have been characterized in this manner. This passage from Gene Bell-Villada, a professor at Williams College who received his PhD from Harvard University, gives us a taste of her low standing in the minds of the many scholars who view her more as a religious figure than a philosopher:

Randianism is also a mass phenomenon – an object of wide-eyed reverence for the faithful, and an oddity, a risible nuisance or a perniciously seductive dogma for many others...Randian history has all the morbid if fascinating features of a religious sect...Like all guru-centered cults, Randism has had its fair share of eager acolytes, passive followers, and loyal dissidents...Randianism also exists as a consistent and rather simple set of beliefs, a theology one readily grasps and absorbs after spending some time with its scriptures. (227-228)

Bell-Villada's lively commentary, which includes a description of Rand as "a nasty little dictator," is a colorful illustration of the type of rebuke Rand has recently drawn from her critics in academia. Though many scholars critical of Rand now unenthusiastically accept the fact that, due to her consistent and expanding appeal, they must at least address the notion that she may need to be considered in the realm of legitimate modern philosophers, one must understand that there is a second straightforward and powerful reason for academia's past avoidance of Rand: politics.

Maybe even more so than gender bias, a lack of philosophical (political) diversity among university faculty may explain why Rand has been swept under the rug for so long. Decades of whispers by conservative students of prejudicial treatment by left-leaning professors have grown into shouts in recent years as their suspicions have been confirmed by an ever-growing body of evidence. As cited in the journal article "Liberal Bias in Academe" by Glenn Walters, Jr., the findings of a 2007 study on the

subject by John Gravois are startling, “Among the ranks of registered voters, ‘Democratic professors outnumber Republicans about 10 to one’ (1). Inherently, there is nothing necessarily wrong or cautionary about this statement. However, if a professor intentionally and arbitrarily exploits students, especially those with impressionable natures, then liberal bias can become an ethical problem” (1). Most professors surely maintain a high level of objectivity in their classes and research, but when there are ten times as many Democrats as Republicans in the faculty, there is no doubt that at least some overtly political prejudice will occur and that subconscious biases may also affect analyses of subjective fields such as literary analysis. Rand, having been reluctantly embraced by the Republican Party for her support of individual rights and free market capitalism, is nearly universally reviled in Democratic circles. Given the ideological bent of approximately ninety percent of academics, it is only natural that they might choose to spend more time researching authors and philosophers with whom they share similar values. Furthermore, it follows that scholars who sincerely consider Objectivism to be no more than a childish sect may be inclined to ignore completely the literature of the author behind such a philosophy. For decades, during the few times that Rand’s fictional writings were not entirely omitted from academic journals, the argument has been made that Rand’s fiction does not qualify as literature, but is nothing more than educational tracts. This passage by Max E. Fletcher is emblematic of this viewpoint and shows that, though ideological proclivities in academia do not exclusively affect Rand related research, they are of particular importance with regard to the perception of her works by left-leaning scholars:

Harriet Martineau was not the first fiction writer to engage in economic commentary, nor will Ayn Rand be the last. The utopian novelists of necessity have had to deal with economic ideas and institutions. Popular writers – Dickens, Kingsley, Twain, Norris, Dos Passos, and many others – have engaged in extensive economic commentary in the development of their themes. And the businessman, foreign as well as American, has been portrayed in an extended series of novels, stories and plays (2). With few exceptions, however, these other uses of economic and business themes and materials differ in two ways from those found in the writings of Miss Martineau and Ayn Rand. The novels of most other

writers have been intended first as works of art and only secondarily as educational tracts. Harriet Martineau's and Miss Rand's stories, on the other hand, are primarily sugar coatings for tracts. And while most other writers have been suspicious of businessmen and hostile to the business system, Miss Martineau and Miss Rand lionize the entrepreneur and parade the virtues of the free enterprise system. (367-368)

Fletcher is firm in his assertion that Rand's fiction is not art but merely "sugar coatings for tracts." However, he overlooks the fact that he has also unwittingly proven the existence of political biases in the subjective field of literary analysis. Restated simply, if an author is "suspicious of businessmen and hostile to the business system," his writings are to be considered art with philosophical traces, but if a writer decides to "parade the virtues of the free enterprise system," her works are to be treated as mere tracts with a touch of creativity (368). Given the lack of an objective correlation between this thematic divergence and the artistic merit of a piece, one must conclude that a political opposition to the free market system has subtly but rather overtly influenced Fletcher's literary appraisal of Rand and Martineau. Finally, harkening back to the aforementioned gender biases in philosophy, one's attention is drawn to the curious fact that the two authors whose work one is encouraged to disregard are female, while the five authors whose novels one is urged to hold in high esteem are all men. No matter the reason that scholars chose to overlook Rand for decades, it is clear that her own hostile nature toward academia and her numerous controversial public statements did not help to persuade them that she should be respected as a subject deserved of serious study.

Intrinsically averse to many of Rand's ideas from the beginning, her militant temperament and sometimes outlandish comments made scholars even less interested in taking a deep and sober look at her philosophy and literature. Marder Kamhi and Torres note that her "*Romantic Manifesto* has languished in relative obscurity. Ill-disposed to Rand from the start, many intellectuals would scarcely be inclined to probe beyond the obstacles she placed in their path" (8). If most American university professors were opposed to Rand, it's safe to say that the feeling was mutual. Throughout her career, Rand criticized American academia and went so far as to say that, "The sources and

centers of today's philosophical corruption are the universities" (*The Voice of Reason* 153). Furthermore, the antagonism which she reciprocated toward scholars seems meek compared to some of the aspects of her literature and philosophy which are, at a minimum, complicated, and which many find to be downright offensive.

In at least three of her works of fiction, Rand's heroes partake in violent sex, after which the heroine comes out bruised, battered, bloodied, yet feels the rapturous satisfaction of having been treated like a whore. Almost seventy years before *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Rand broke social norms in *The Fountainhead* by writing not of rape fantasies, but of the actual rape of her heroine by the hero, Howard Roark. She purposefully left the rape scene itself ambiguous, but later in the novel her heroine, Dominique, confirms that not only was she in fact raped, but that she enjoyed it. Rand critic, Bell-Villada, who describes Dominique as, "The gorgeous and cold-hearted heroine-cum-bitch," gives us a provocative description of the event, "[Roark] proceeds scornfully to toss her onto the bed and violate her without uttering a word. And, reader, she adores it. Next morning, a blissful Dominique, the dominatrix now tamed, goes around chirping repeatedly to herself, 'I've been raped...I've been raped'" (229, 234). However, Rand supporters have since argued that Dominique gives implicit consent through her actions, and that if she had needed to give explicit permission, it would have proven that Roark was not the type of hero she for whom she longed. The case could be made that this is plain old creative license were it not for Rand's non-fiction writings and public declarations on the topic of masculinity and femininity. She held that masculinity entails being a hero, while the core of femininity is "hero-worship." The man as the priest and the woman as the "priestess" (*Journals of Ayn Rand* 62). A corollary to this position led to one of Rand's most controversial public statements. She asserted on multiple occasions that she would not vote for a woman for President of the United States because she found it unspeakable that a woman would lead men as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In a personal interview for this study, Dr. Yaron Brook, the Executive Director of the Ayn Rand Institute, gives an explanation for this notorious portion of Rand's writings:

She has a particular view of sexuality, of femininity and masculinity. It's important to note that this is a view that is both literary and

psychological, but not philosophical. This is not philosophy. This is psychology. She views women as equally smart, equally rational, equally competent, equal in everything. She just believes there is a psychological element that makes men and women different.

Beyond making the crucial differentiation between her philosophy and her views on gender psychology, Dr. Brook goes on to note that the female characters which Rand penned are some of the most independent and assertive heroines in the history of literature: “This whole idea of, oh, Ayn Rand, she believes women are weak or women are subservient. Bullshit! Look at her females that she portrays in her novels. These are strong, powerful, sexual, unbelievably competent, and, in *Atlas Shrugged*, better than almost every man out there in terms of running a business...She is portraying women as active, as engaged, as dynamic, as exciting.” Though Rand’s proponents like Dr. Brook appropriately point out the positive aspects that she brought to feminism in literature and philosophy, her more controversial remarks on this subject may explain in part why scholars steered clear of her for so long.

Rand’s adoration of technological advancement and pure individualism led to polemical public comments which lacked the nuanced explanations of her writings and, even with the care and subtlety of her written word, may have proven repellent to many in academia. Rand’s writings, though still very frank and unyielding, gave her the time to carefully and thoroughly clarify the more out-of-the-box and possibly offensive aspects of the practical implementation of her Objectivist philosophy. However, as she ventured out on speaking tours and interviews over the last two decades of her life, the unabashed nature with which she sometimes answered questions did not include the same delicate intricacies, leaving many shocked, baffled, and offended. For example, during a 1974 question and answer session at the United States Military Academy at West Point, when asked about the American government’s murderous policies with regard to Native Americans in the mid-19th Century, Rand’s response left many disturbed:

I do not think that they had any right to live in a country merely because they were born here and lived like savages...since the Indians did not have any property rights, they didn’t have the concept of property, they

didn't have a settled society, they were predominantly nomadic tribes, they were a primitive tribal culture, if you want to call it that. If so, they didn't have any right to the land and there was no reason for anyone to grant them rights which they had not conceived and they were not using...if a country does not protect rights, if a tribe is the slave of its own tribal chief, why should you respect the rights they do not have?...Any white person who brings the element of civilization had the right to takeover this country.

Her comment seemed to have some basis in the Lockean theory of property rights in a State of Nature, but her personal love affair with modernity propelled her far beyond Locke's notions of property rights. She excused the theft of Native American lands and the killing of thousands principally because their cultures were not as industrialized. Five years later, when asked of her position on the Arab-Israeli conflict during an interview on Donahue, she came to her conclusion via the same rationale, "Whose side should one be on, Israel or the Arabs? I would certainly say Israel because it's the advanced, technological, civilized country amidst a group of almost totally primitive savages who have not changed for years, and who are racist, and who resent Israel because it's bringing industry and intelligence and modern technology into their stagnation." She went on to make more mainstream arguments in defense of Israel, but the fact that her first thought was of technological development and not questions of morality gives us an insight into her worldview, a worldview which many scholars found too disquieting to discuss for many years.

The decades-long near blackout of Rand scholarship ended in 1999 with the establishment of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies (JARS)* by Chris Matthew Sciabarra of Pennsylvania State University. Having recognized the disparity between the miniscule amount of Rand research by academics and her immense artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical impact, Dr. Sciabarra set up a journal that would go on to produce extensive examinations of her work and importance in all of the many fields within her sphere of influence. *JARS* has featured analyzes from some of the world's most renowned intellectuals, and it has quickly become the premier source of Rand scholarship as it has proven to be an open forum for critics and proponents alike. The

flood of in-depth studies published by *JARS* has provided for a much greater understanding of Rand's philosophy as well as her sway in contemporary economics, but it seems that its investigations have only begun to uncover the reach of Rand's place as an artistic and politically relevant figure. *JARS* has included limited but enlightening analyses of her Romantic theory of art and her influence on artists in fields as diverse as comic books and interpretive dance. These articles have formed a base for future Rand related literary and artistic analysis, and will surely lead to more exhaustive scholarship on a topic on which academia is only now scratching the surface. *JARS* has enjoyed a successful run of more than fifteen years, and there seems to be no end sight for this popular journal.

Due in large part to her broadening impact in the arts, pop culture, philosophy, economics, and politics, along with the continued success of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, it is clear that academia has finally been forced to take a serious look at Rand as an author and philosopher. In his article, "When Avoiding Scholarship is the Scholarly Thing to Do: Mary Midgley's Misinterpretation of Ayn Rand," Dr. Robert L. Campbell effectively summarizes the treatment of Rand during the 20th Century:

Contemporary academia is a long way from being a free marketplace of ideas. The customs of discipline, speciality, and faction closely regulate who is allowed to participate in the intellectual disputes of the day. Those deemed unworthy are preferentially ignored. When they can't be ignored, they must be dismissed – the quicker the better...Though the grounds for blackballing, and total exclusion from academic discourse, are overwhelming, Rand can't always be ignored; novels like *The Fountainhead* were and are too widely read. (53)

Having now passed through the stages of "blackballing" and dismissal of Rand, the academic community now widely, maybe reluctantly, admits that she can no longer be overlooked. The birth of scholarly interest with regard to Rand, especially the articles published by *JARS*, will undoubtedly help to fan the flames of the 21st-Century Rand resurgence. Critics and advocates alike now agree that she is a figure who merits legitimate recognition by the academic community. Though much research and analysis

has been done over the last fifteen years, the accelerated expansion of her scope of her influence will necessitate continued scholarly investigations for years to come.

CHAPTER 2

Scope of Influence

The recent increase in Rand related scholarship has uncovered the vast and growing scope of her influence throughout an impressively wide variety of fields. Her literature had an immediate impact on international cinema as her novel, *We the Living*, was translated to the silver screen by Italian director, Goffredo Alessandrini, in 1942 with *Addio Kira*, followed by the 1949 film version of her novel, *The Fountainhead*. Furthermore, new academic research has discovered that both her philosophy and her artistic style continue to inspire world famous filmmakers, comic book writers, and authors well into the 21st century. The effects of her writings, both fiction and nonfiction, were first noticed outside of the arts in the 1960's and 70's when renowned free market economists of the Austrian School began to reference her as a standard-bearer for their cause. Her immense sway in the field of economics then spilled over into the realm of politics as her two seminal novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, conspicuously not her extensive nonfiction work, have become the de facto bibles for leaders of the modern Republican Party in the United States. Though the enormous practical impact of her philosophy is readily apparent in American pop culture, business, politics, and the arts, Objectivism is still slow to gain recognition from the philosophical intelligentsia. However, as will be posited at length in a later section, one may reasonably surmise that, during the decades to come, Rand will be seen as having laid a more comprehensive philosophical base than any previous figure for what will come to be known as the philosophy of American Individualism. Before delving into the makeup of Objectivism and Rand's place in the history American philosophy, this section will detail the broad scope of her influence in each of the aforementioned disciplines.

Economics, Business, and Architecture

Due to her unapologetic defense of the free market system, Ayn Rand has become an idol for laissez faire capitalists all across the planet. Even before she began to write in-depth essays regarding her views on topics such as deregulation and government intervention in private enterprise, her novels were already widely cited by economists who supported free market systems. Moreover, her novels have helped to concretize the visions of young entrepreneurs and aspiring architects for generations, so much so that they are now often taught in business and architecture schools.

During the 1960's, Rand became recognized as the philosophical figurehead of the so-called Austrian School of economics, and her influence in the field came to a culmination with the appointment of one of her young apprentices, Alan Greenspan, as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board in 1987. Despite Rand's bitter denunciations of President Ronald Reagan, one of the most important appointments that Reagan made during his tenure, that of Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, was given to a close counterpart of hers, Alan Greenspan. Greenspan spent many years in New York City as an integral part of Rand's close circle of confidantes, ironically dubbed "The Collective" by its individualist members. The exclusive group met on a regular basis to discuss philosophy, current events, and the state of the modern world. Greenspan even wrote several articles, usually having to do with business ethics or economics, for Rand's monthly periodical, *The Objectivist Newsletter*. Both Rand and Greenspan were critical of government intervention into private business and were fierce advocates of a free market economy. Greenspan claimed to have made an effort to apply this philosophy to his policies while he served at the Federal Reserve, the United States' central bank that dictates the money supply and controls interest rates. During most of his tenure, Greenspan was hailed as a champion of the free market, and he earned the nickname "Maestro" for having been the chief economic engineer during the period of the greatest expansion of wealth in all of human history (La Monica). After the global financial crisis of 2008, however, it became apparent that some of the policies of the previous two decades had caused the largest credit bubble that mankind had ever seen. Greenspan's policies of incremental inflation and artificially low interest rates, which he claimed were based on free market principles, were central causes of the bubble that

eventually led to the devastating collapse. When questions arose about Greenspan's lack of foresight in predicting such a market catastrophe, Congressman Henry Waxman asked him whether "your [Greenspan's] view of the world, your ideology was not right? It was not working?" Greenspan answered, "Precisely. That was precisely the reason I was shocked. Because I've been going for forty years or more with very considerable evidence that it was working exceptionally well" ("Greenspan didn't anticipate financial crisis"). Whether or not Greenspan's ideology was concurrent with Rand's at the time is debatable, but there is strong evidence that he had long abandoned his free market stance in practice, leaning toward a sort of Western cronyism, while continuing to espouse the virtues free markets in principle. One defender of capitalism who correctly predicted the financial meltdown is three-time presidential candidate and thirteen-term congressman from the state of Texas, Ron Paul. In 2007, prior to the economic downturn, he made known his opinion regarding Greenspan, saying starkly, "Everything he's done in his public life has rejected everything he believed about Objectivism." Congressman Paul went on to applaud Rand's work and said that she made an indelible mark on philosophy and literature, "She contributed tremendously. I think *Atlas Shrugged* might be the second most read book in history, and you know how she was treated? Nobody gave her reviews and, if they did, it was horrible, horrible, horrible! It was word of mouth, and she still sold millions and millions of copies because it was telling the truth and people were anxious to hear it" ("Ron Paul discusses Ayn Rand"). It is noteworthy that Congressman Paul states that Rand's works are some of the "most read book(s) in history," because, though it is impossible to measure empirically, it is often mentioned anecdotally that Rand's novels do not simply sit on the bookshelf collecting dust, but are more often actually read than other comparable works of literature.

Another prominent twentieth-century American immigrant who also fled the threat of violence in Europe and found a home in New York City was the Austrian economics expert, Ludwig von Mises (Hülsmann). Von Mises, who lauded Rand's philosophy and her literary talents, was one of the leading members of a group of Austrian economists who, in the early twentieth century, revolutionized the field by incorporating philosophy into their theories of free market economics. He and fellow economists of the Austrian School have been, and continue to be, the counterbalance to

the Keynesian School of economics which preaches central economic planning and expansion through varying degrees of macroeconomic manipulation of the money supply, similar to what the Federal Reserve does. A counterpart of von Mises, Murray Rothbard, explains simply the essence of the divide between the two economic philosophies, “We have seen that a free market tends to lead to abundance for all of its participants, and...that violent intervention in the market and a hegemonic society tend to lead to general poverty” (Rothbard 340). The Keynesian school of economics, on the other hand, can be summed up in the words of Keynes himself regarding his opinion of the grandiose influence of central planning economists:

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist...soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil. (Keynes 383-384)

The British economist, John Maynard Keynes, was asked if his theories, when practically applied, would work in the long run, and his answer has now become famous for its cynicism and apathy, “In the long run we are all dead.” Now long dead himself, the consequences of Keynes’ theories are still felt by citizens all over the world as “defunct economist(s)” recommend further national and private indebtedness to stimulate economic activity. In the words of Paul Samuelson, the Nobel Prize winning American economist, “Keynes was wrong: in the long run not all of us are dead” (467).

Keynes opponent, Von Mises, argued that *laissez faire* capitalism was the only moral and practical way of running an economy, thus he became quite a fan of Rand’s philosophy and of her novels. Though literary critics almost universally chided her writing style and berated Objectivism as hateful, Von Mises praised her novel as the most honest and necessary piece of literature upon which he had ever stumbled. In a personal letter written to Rand in 1958, he told her, “*Atlas Shrugged* is not merely a novel. It is...a cogent analysis of the evils that plague our society.” Von Mises went on to further compliment Rand, “You have the courage to tell the masses what no politician

told them: you are inferior and all the improvements in your conditions which you simply take for granted you owe to the effort of men who are better than you” (11). It is noteworthy that Von Mises took time to applaud Rand for an aspect of her writings for which she has often been derided – her disdain for the average person accompanied by an exalted reverence for “men who are better.” This is a sentiment to which Rand devotes much attention in *The Fountainhead*. One of her fallen heroes, Gail Wynand, laments what he sees as a low expectation of mankind:

The one that claims the pig is the symbol of love for humanity – the creature that accepts anything. As a matter of fact, the person who loves everybody and feels at home everywhere is the true hater of mankind. He expects nothing of men, so no form of depravity can outrage him...there are many of that kind. I mean the person who loves Joan of Arc and the salesgirls in dress shops on Broadway – with an equal fervor...One can’t love man without hating most of the creatures who pretend to bear his name. (444)

Though he disagreed with the condescending mentality of Von Mises and Rand, famed free market economist, Milton Friedman, declared the importance of the two figures to the spread of libertarian leaning economic principles, “There is no doubt in my mind that no one has done more to spread the fundamental ideas of free markets than Ludwig von Mises. There is no doubt in my mind that few people, if anybody, nobody has done more to develop a popular following for many of these ideas than Ayn Rand.” Having long been credited with the renewed popularization of laissez faire capitalism, new admissions have shown a light on the fact that her writings also inspired some of the most successful and transcendent capitalists of the last hundred years.

Rand’s two epic novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, have served as the principle source of motivation for some of the world’s most well-known entrepreneurs. Until recently, it has been so trendy to ridicule Rand that many of her supporters felt it necessary to keep quiet regarding the profound effect her books had on them. World-renowned philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, speaks of this phenomenon, “She is very popular. Her books are, I think, second after the Bible and Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With the Wind* on the list of eternal bestsellers, but nobody publicly refers to her,

although her influence is crucial” (“Žižek about Ayn Rand...”). The 21st-century Rand renaissance has allowed many to shake off this stigma and begin to acknowledge the vital influence that her writings have had in their lives. For example, in a 2011 interview with Bloomberg News, Steve Wozniak, the cofounder of the Apple Corporation, spilled the beans on the role Rand played in the life of his partner, the legendary Steve Jobs. Wozniak stated that Jobs often mentioned *Atlas Shrugged* among the books that were his “guide in life as to how you make a difference in the world” (“Wozniak on Steve Jobs’...”).

Beyond her impact on this internationally recognized figure, Rand played a pivotal part in shaping the character of another well-known American businessman. Billionaire investor, co-host of the popular television show, *Shark Tank*, and owner of the Dallas Mavericks NBA team, Mark Cuban, has described how *The Fountainhead* drove him to achieve greatness, “It was incredibly motivating to me. It encouraged me to think as an individual, take risks to reach my goals, and responsibility for my successes and failures. I loved it. I don’t know how many times I have read it, but it got to the point where I had to stop because I would get too fired up” (“My First Literary Crush...”). Cuban attributes so much of his success to the book that he even named his private yacht “Fountainhead.” He, like millions of others, was drawn to the novel by the message that every individual is powerful and controls his or her own destiny. The empowering thought of literally being able shape the world with one’s ideas has led generations of young people not only to chase their dreams, but to construct those dreams in the same profession as *The Fountainhead*’s protagonist, Howard Roark.

Though many argue whether her impact has been positive or negative, there is no discussion regarding the fact that Ayn Rand, through her depiction of Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead*, had an immense influence on the profession of architecture in the 20th century. In the introduction to the article, “The Fountainhead: Everything That’s Wrong with Architecture,” by nationally recognized architect, author, and Rand critic, Lance Hosey, Rand’s mark on the profession is described thusly, “Howard Roark, the fictional architect envisioned by Ayn Rand in *The Fountainhead*, has possibly done more for the profession in the past century than any real architect at all – inspiring hundreds to enter architecture and greatly shaping the public’s perception.” Hosey,

though he lambastes Rand and he derogatorily labels the architects she inspires as “F*heads,” he admits that *The Fountainhead* “has made legions of young people want to become architects. The late Lebbeus Woods wrote that the story ‘has had an immense impact on the public perception of architects and architecture, and also on architects themselves, for better or worse.’”

One such young person who found his calling via the words of Ayn Rand is famed American architect, Stanley Tigerman. In a recent interview with the *Journal of Architectural Education*, Tigerman recounts the profound effect that *The Fountainhead* had on him, “When I was twelve years old, a book was published in ’43 called *The Fountainhead*. And I read the first edition. I put the book down and decided to become an architect. The book had a huge impact on me...When I read about Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead*, I thought, that is the shit, straight-up. So lots of stuff has changed since then, but all that stays with me” (66-67). It is noteworthy that the novel not only sparked Tigerman’s passion for architecture, but continued to fan the flame throughout his lifetime. Furthermore, it must be taken into special consideration that the influence Rand had on Tigerman was wholly apolitical. He labels her a “Jewish neofascist” and does not speak positively of her or her philosophical writings, but only of the enduring importance of *The Fountainhead* and, more specifically, the character of Howard Roark. Even more noteworthy is the fact that many of Tigerman’s buildings bear a striking resemblance to the descriptions of the designs of Roark, leading one to conclude that Rand served not only as a motivational figure for him, but as an aesthetic mentor, as well.

The multifaceted nature of her influence in the worlds of economics, business, and architecture is unmatched by any other figure, let alone a novelist. Rand, through *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, has developed into everything from a world-renowned economics professor to a driving force for some of the most widely acclaimed entrepreneurs of the 21st Century. She has become a self-help guru for some and an architectural guide for others. Though the scope of her influence in these disciplines is both vast in breadth and diverse in nature, this is merely the tip of the iceberg with regard to the enormous impact of Rand in a wide range of disparate fields.

Literature, Comic Books, and Film

In his journal article, “Who Was Ayn Rand?” published in 2004, Gene H. Bell-Villada stated that, “Rand’s work will most likely go unread fifty years from now...she won a niche for herself on the fringes of political respectability. As an artist, however, her contribution is nil...there is nothing that a self-respecting writer might learn specifically from her screeds other than how not to write” (241-242). In the years since this article was written, however, research published in scholarly journals and several interviews in the press have finally shed a bit of light on Rand’s extensive influence throughout various branches of the arts. Having been ignored by academia for decades, the latest research is only scratching the surface of Rand’s literary reach, “Because Rand’s fiction is so seldom studied and criticized by scholars, literary or otherwise, fewer critical works exist on this consideration than most others” (Powell 207). Though studies related to Rand’s artistic impact have only begun recently, scholars have already uncovered an impressive array of writers and filmmakers who have been directly inspired by Rand. Researchers have found that, for more than a half century, her two seminal novels have kindled the passions, both philosophically and stylistically, of countless artists across many art forms, “*The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* are probably two of the most loved and hated works of American Literature. Love or hate her fiction, in terms of influence and representational balance, no matter how good or bad one may think it is, Ayn Rand leaves almost no genre or aspect of the American imagination untouched” (Powell 231-232). Academics have now drawn clear lines of influence from Rand’s novels to prominent 20th century authors, a heralded Noble Prize laureate, the creators of the modern American superhero, and several A-List film directors.

Scholars are only now scratching the surface of Rand’s literary legacy, but they have already discovered that she has had a considerable influence on many high-profile authors. Unmistakable traces of Rand’s thematic and aesthetic influence are found in the works of Ira Levin, the renowned author of *Rosemary’s Baby* and *The Stepford Wives*. Levin’s dystopian novel, *This Perfect Day*, which is often compared to George Orwell’s *1984* and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, bears even more striking similarities to Rand’s novella *Anthem*. *Anthem* and *This Perfect Day* are both set in futuristic,

collectivist dystopias in which the heroes are not given names, but called Equality 7-2521 and Li RM35M4419 (nicknamed Chip) respectively. In both stories, the hero happens upon artifacts from the past which have been stricken from the history books as to prevent the rediscovery of concepts like freedom and individuality which are deemed dangers to the security of the collective. Both tales follow the hero as he becomes enamored of a young girl and they escape together from their repressive societies. In addition to the parallel plots and comparable language of these pieces, Levin also reenacts one of the most notorious features of Rand's writing – the rape of the heroine by the hero. Just as Howard Roark forces himself upon Dominique Francon in *The Fountainhead*, Chip brutally violates the innocent, young Lilac in *This Perfect Day*. While decades earlier, Rand left the rape scene relatively ambiguous, Levin's description of the vicious assault is so detailed that it reads more like an instruction manual, like the veritable *Anarchist Cookbook* for rapists. Though the scenes differ in the degree of their graphic descriptions, the heroines' reactions to the disturbing episodes are the same in both cases. Dominique gives "implicit consent" to Roark, and, when the two wake up the day after the cruel attack, Chip apologizes to Lilac for having raped her, but she responds, "I don't blame you. It was perfectly natural. How's your hand?" (Levin 205). She regards the rape as "perfectly natural" and concerns herself more for the condition of his hand, which she bit during the struggle as he covered her mouth to keep her from screaming in agony. Beyond these undeniable literary correlations, one is able to find confirmation of the tremendous impact Rand had on Levin in their personal correspondences. They met on a few occasions, but no one knows the extent of personal interaction between the two authors during those encounters. However, a letter that Levin once wrote to Rand leaves no doubt that *The Fountainhead*, specifically, left a lasting mark on him, writing, "Like the very young man who stood beside Howard Roark and looked down on Monadnock Valley, I need say nothing but – thank you." Rand clearly appreciated the gratitude and approved of Levin's writings since she responded to him simply, "To Mr. Levin: In answer to your letter: Thank *you*" (as cited in Riggerbach 119). Though it cannot be as explicitly proven as in the case of Ira Levin, recent research has demonstrated that Rand's scope of influence also extended to one of the most celebrated authors of the past century.

Tedious literary analysis by Virginia Tech University Professor Shoshana Milgram Knapp, PhD., has determined that *The Fountainhead*, specifically Roark's speech, significantly influenced some of the writings of Noble Prize winner John Steinbeck. Knapp describes Steinbeck's tendency to assimilate into his own writings pieces of works he enjoyed, "once Steinbeck learned or read something he liked (an idea, a scene, an expression), there was a good chance that he would include it – in some form – in his own work" (30). She goes on to bolster this notion by citing a letter that Steinbeck once wrote to his friend, Edith Wagner, "I'm terribly sorry if I have filched one of your stories. I'm a shameless magpie anyway, picking up anything shiny that comes my way" (as cited in Knapp 30). Given the fact that Steinbeck was well-read in the literature of his contemporaries and ran in similar social circles as Rand, it is reasonable to expect that he was familiar with her work. The assertion that *The Fountainhead* was a shiny something that Steinbeck picked up turns into a logical deduction when one compares passages from Roark's speech to several sections of *East of Eden*. The following is an excerpt from *The Fountainhead*, "The creative faculty cannot be given or received, shared or borrowed...No work is ever done collectively by a majority decision. Every creative job is achieved under the guidance of a single individual thought." This concept is then parroted almost verbatim in *East of Eden*, "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...the group never invents anything" (as cited in Knapp 26).

The supremacy of the individual mind is central to Rand's writings, and the major threat to its security is the whim of violent mobs. This is an idea which is also reiterated by Steinbeck. First, from Roark, "In our age, collectivism, the rule of the second-hander and second-rater, the ancient monster, has broken loose and is running amuck. It has brought men to a level of intellectual indecency never equaled on earth...It has poisoned every mind. It has swallowed most of Europe. It is engulfing our country." Now from *East of Eden*, "In our time mass or collective production has entered our economics, our politics, and even our religion, so that some nations have substituted the idea of collective for the idea God...There is a great tension in the world, tension toward a breaking point...It is a sad suicidal course our species seems to have taken" (as cited in Knapp 26). These sections are so noticeably alike that one is hard-

pressed to conclude anything except the fact that Rand was a direct literary influence on Steinbeck. Some aspects may be coincidental, but if taken as a whole, and sequentially as they appear in the two novels, little doubt remains, as Knapp explains in more detail, “The defense of the individualism of the creative spirit, to be sure, is not unique to Rand and Steinbeck. What is distinctive, and striking, is the juxtaposition, indeed the opposition, of creativity to collectivism, the statement that *collective creation* is a contradiction in terms” (27). Having verified Rand’s decidedly meaningful mark on “high literature” through an author of such prestige, one becomes ever more impressed by the reach of her influence when examining her extensive legacy in the sphere of popular fiction.

Some academics have asserted a looser, yet verifiable, Randian touch in the works of popular fiction writers Ian Fleming and Gene Roddenberry. Due to the fierce individualism and the frank yet sparse dialogue of the hero, along with Rand’s own laudatory comments about the author, Ian Fleming’s James Bond character is said to have been modeled after Rand’s “ideal man.” In addition, the famously indifferent and transactional nature of Bond’s sex life is reflective of that of many of Rand’s heroes, most notably in *The Fountainhead* and *Night of January 16th*. The connection between Rand and Roddenberry, the creator of the world-famous *Star Trek* series, is even more substantial given the author’s own public admissions. When asked by Sondra Marshak in 1975 if he had ever read Ayn Rand, Roddenberry stated, “Oh, yes. I read *The Fountainhead* four or five times, *Atlas Shrugged*, but also some of her nonfiction – her book on art” (as cited in Riggerbach 120). Given the fact that *The Fountainhead* is a novel of nearly eight-hundred pages and *Atlas Shrugged* checks in at nearly twelve-hundred, the time and level of interest invested in multiple readings of these works constitute a serious and long-term literary relationship. Though Roddenberry’s disagreements with Rand’s politics are harsh and definitive, Marshak explains how Rand left an indelible mark on the fictional world of *Star Trek*, a world that is indisputably Objectivist and anti-Kantian:

When *Star Trek* says, “The universe is a place where the mind *can* know. Success is the result of deliberate actions,” to a viewer who actually lives in an environment where people say with their every word, expression

and deed, “Knowledge cannot cause success. My failure isn’t my fault. You’re not better than me, you’re just lucky!” – then *Star Trek* feeds tremendous, vital energy to the real world. (as cited in Riggenbach 120-121)

Marshak’s deduction is then summarized by libertarian economist, Jeff Riggenbach, who says, “in feeding such ideas to the real world, *Star Trek* is undeniably passing along, popularizing, a key element of Rand’s vision of life” (121). This concept of a tangible yet fleeting nature of existence is pillar of Rand’s Objectivist philosophy. She often stated succinctly that, “*existence exists...and you know it*” (*Atlas Shrugged* 929). Furthermore, the “vision of life” which Roddenberry skillfully weaves in *Star Trek* is reflective of what Rand coined a “Romantic sense of life” (*The Romantic Manifesto* 121). A sense of life is defined by Rand as, “a preconceptual equivalent of metaphysics, an emotional, subconsciously integrated appraisal of man and of existence” (*The Romantic Manifesto* 118). Expressed more plainly, it is a mixture of one’s conscience with the way one views the world. Thus a Romantic sense of life, which Rand claims is natural in human beings and, therefore, common in children, “is only a *sense*, an incoherent emotion which he can neither communicate nor explain nor defend. It is an intense, yet fragile emotion, painfully vulnerable to any sarcastic allegation, since he is unable to identify its meaning” (*The Romantic Manifesto* 121-122). She views it as necessary to guide one’s life, but the Romantic sense of life “is only a *sense*” that will lead to serious cognitive dissonance if not identified and concretized by using one’s rational capacities. Also, according to Rand, this underlying drive toward passion and heroism felt as children is too regularly driven out during adolescence by the reinforcement of misguided traditional codes of morality. Whether this is true or not, what is certain is that many authors, Roddenberry included, have absorbed a Romantic sense of life and an Objectivist concept of reality from Rand and have incorporated these aspects into their own works. This approach was reaffirmed by Erika Holzer, who was a young author struggling to find her voice when she first met Rand. Holzer tells of how Rand’s writings brought clarity to the blurry vision of “drama” that she wanted out of her fiction, “My innate sense of drama was inchoate, meandering; hers was fixed and firm. Her novels had a sort of Aristotelian effect on me, their very existence daring me to dream: Why must I write about the kind of people I’ve known all my life? Why can’t

I write about audacious men and unusual women who might and *ought* to be living in my world, even if they're not?" ("Passing the Torch" 64). Though Holzer had a personal relationship with Rand and gives direct attribution to her for the literary worldview she would come to adopt, it is clear that Roddenberry's Objectivist *Star Trek* universe and Fleming's individualist hero "who might and *ought* to be living" in the world are also the literary progeny of Ayn Rand. These are just three examples of authors who notably adopted Rand's sense of life, but academics have now concluded that both her style and philosophy have been embraced by key figures in another popular art form.

Rand's writings have served as a primary source of inspiration for some of the creators of the modern American hero, comic book writers. The art form became extremely popular in the United States in the mid-20th Century, and due to the overwhelming success of 21st-century movies adapted from comic books – there has been an average of four comic book based pictures in the top fifteen grossing films of each of the past five years ("Worldwide Box Office Records") – the contemporary image of an American hero has, indeed, become that of the comic book superhero. This global movie phenomenon was kicked off by the enormous success of the *Spider-Man* trilogy. Released between 2000 and 2007, these blockbusters were so popular that all three landed on the list of top grossing films of the decade – #5, #10, and #13, respectively ("Top-US-Grossing..."). Proving to have such wide commercial appeal, the Spider-Man character has become the prototype hero for the booming business of movies based on comic books. The writer and artist who played a vital role in the shaping this now universally recognizable character is the co-creator of the Spider-Man comic book character, Steve Ditko. Furthermore, one would be hard-pressed to find a more essential philosophical and stylistic influence on Ditko than Ayn Rand. As Rand scholar, Chris Matthew Sciabarra puts it, "No comic artist has been better known for incorporating Randian themes in his work than Steve Ditko... Ditko's prose is indisputably Randian, motivated by a profound concern for life and for an uncompromising devotion to justice" ("The Illustrated Rand" 8, 10). In fact, not only were many of his lines lifted nearly verbatim from Rand's writings, Ditko even based two of his characters on Rand's philosophy of Objectivism. Mr. A, who was named after one of Rand's favorite axioms from Aristotle's Law of Identity, "A is A," and The Question were both strict adherents to the tenets of Objectivism.

Furthermore, according to comic book artist and reporter, Jon B. Cook, these two characters were re-envisioned for a role critical of Rand in Alan Moore's famed *Watchmen* comics in the late-1980's, "In the *Watchmen*, Moore actually resurrects Ditko's Mr. A and The Question (whose 'real' name was Victor Sage) through the character Rorschach, whom he portrays as a raving right-wing vigilante" (as cited in "The Illustrated Rand" 9). Though Rand's mark on the work of Ditko and Moore may have been deeply philosophical at times, both in their work and in the world of comic heroes as a whole, her influence is regarded as much more literary than ideological. For example, the archetypal comic hero shares the Romantic sense of life portrayed by Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead*, and the comic world is often saved by extraordinary *individuals* who possess special powers, similar to Roark's superhuman drive to realize his dreams in the field of architecture. In an interview with comic book reporter, Dan Hagen, Rand's protégé, Nathaniel Branden, described even more similarities between Rand's protagonists and those repeatedly found in the pages of American comic books, "The comic hero, like the Randian hero, revels in his 'outsider' status. 'They are all the outsiders,' Branden observes. 'They are all doing good work, but are, in many ways, unappreciated, misunderstood or even opposed'" (as cited in "The Illustrated Rand" 5-6). One pivotal figure in comic book history who has openly recognized this creative Rand effect is Frank Miller, the famed author of successful comics *The Dark Knight*, *300*, and *Sin City*. The aforementioned Dan Hagen keenly notes that, "Miller's Randian influence is less political than it is aesthetic and literary, insofar as he constructs single-minded, intransigent characters" (as cited in "The Illustrated Rand" 12). Miller himself has attested to Rand's artistic impact on him and his writings, "Rand focused instead on issues of competence and incompetence, courage and cowardice, and took the fate of humanity out of the hands of a convenient 'Big Brother' and placed it in the hands of individuals with individual strengths and individual choices made for good or evil. I gratefully and humbly acknowledge the creative debt" (as cited in "The Illustrated Rand" 12). As arguably the most well-known comic book writer of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Miller has been a key figure in shaping the Randian individualistic, outsider image of the contemporary American hero. Just as Ditko's Spider-Man character has been exalted by the movie trilogy,

Miller's heroes have been further popularized by the momentous box office success of the recent film adaptations of his comics.

One of these adaptations, *300*, the surprise hit of 2007 which was the seventh highest grossing movie of the year, was directed by Zack Snyder ("Worldwide Box Office Records"). Though he has bounced to and fro between acclaim and derision from critics, Snyder has been a commercial sure thing for studios. For this reason, he was tapped to direct the movie version of Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, as well as the controversial *Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice* picture. Coming full circle, though he has his hands full directing the upcoming *Justice League* series, Snyder has publicly declared that his pet project, his labor of love, would be to someday remake *The Fountainhead*. This tells us that Rand left her mark on yet another contemporary artist, and if Snyder does manage to bring his dream to fruition, the legions of fans who love the comic book heroes influenced by Rand would be introduced to her work directly. A successful film resurrection of *The Fountainhead* would launch the ongoing Rand renaissance to new heights and would ensure that she continues to be both a philosophical and artistic force throughout the rest of the 21st century.

The recent research and interviews cited in this section show that Rand's literary and aesthetic impact extends far beyond that which was previously assumed. Moreover, her creative influence is currently expanding precipitously, especially in the realm of filmmaking. This means that her artistic importance, both amongst those like Steve Ditko who embrace her style and those like Alan Moore who wish to oppose her, will not only swell in reach over the next few decades, but also be better understood due to ever broadening academic inquiry. With such a vast and growing impact on thought leaders like artists, businessmen, and economists alike, it is impossible that the influence of such a polarizing and widely recognized figure does not seep into the culture itself.

Media, Television, and Pop Culture

Having profoundly touched, both positively and negatively, so many notable personalities, Rand has found a firm place in American pop culture. She has been

mentioned in some fashion on a multitude of popular television shows including but certainly not limited to *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, *Jeopardy*, *Home Improvement*, *Frasier*, and *Queer as Folk*, and “In Gene Roddenberry’s sci-fi series, *Andromeda*, there is a colony called the ‘Ayn Rand Station,’ founded by a species of ‘Nietzscheans’” (“The Illustrated Rand 4). However, since her philosophy is such a source of controversy and her writing style is so unique, Rand is often the subject of scathing attacks and ridicule, many times ending up as the punch line of jokes for television comedians. The strategy employed by her critics in the media and television is one that Rand herself foresaw via her antagonist, Ellsworth Toohey, in *The Fountainhead* more than seventy years earlier. Toohey explains how he manipulates the masses by convincing them that nothing in life is worth taking too seriously:

Want to know how it’s done? ...Kill by laughter. Laughter is an instrument of human joy. Learn to use it as a weapon of destruction. Turn it into a sneer. It’s simple. Tell them to laugh at everything. Tell them that a sense of humor is an unlimited virtue. Don’t let anything remain sacred in a man’s soul--and his soul won’t be sacred to him. Kill reverence and you’ve killed the hero in man...anything goes – nothing is too serious. (635-636)

The “if you can’t beat ‘em, make fun of ‘em” tactic has been more consciously exploited by the harshest critics of Rand, those on the American left, since Saul Alinsky, a community organizer based in Chicago and Marxist political activist who will be discussed at more length later in this dissertation, explicitly detailed its effectiveness in his 1971 book, *Rules for Radicals*. In his book, Alinsky lays out rules (strategies) to help self-declared radicals work toward the general goal of taking from those he calls the “Haves” and giving to the “Have-Nots.” Rule number five in Alinsky’s political strategy cookbook is “*Ridicule is man’s most important weapon*. It is almost impossible to counterattack ridicule. Also it infuriates the opposition, who then react to your advantage [emphasis in the original]” (128). Many prominent figures in American pop culture have applied this rule to Ayn Rand in an attempt to paint her as someone whose ideas are but a joke and should never be taken too seriously.

The recent Ayn Rand renaissance has left many unable to avoid including her in their social commentary, but instead of being the subject of substantive discussions regarding the impact of such a widely read author and philosopher, Rand is often the object of caricature and satire. For example, on the March 11, 2009 episode of *The Colbert Report*, the host, Stephen Colbert, simply made fun of Rand's physical appearance, dubbing her an, "author, philosopher, and female comb over pioneer" ("The Word – Rand Illusion"). Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* also found its way into an episode of the often outrageous satirical animated series, *South Park*, as one of the characters told of his experience with having read the book, "At first, I was happy to be learning how to read. It seemed exciting and magical, but then I read this, *Atlas Shrugged*, by Ayn Rand. I read every last word of this garbage and, because of this piece of sh**, I'm never reading again!" ("Plucked").

Rand has even been the focus of mockery during several episodes of *The Simpsons*, one of the most internationally syndicated and longest running television shows of all-time. During a 1992 episode, in just its second season, *The Simpsons* referenced Rand by placing the family's baby, Maggie, in the "Ayn Rand School for Tots." The episode takes a direct jab at Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, which proclaims "the virtue of selfishness," through a poster on the wall of the school that states in large, bold letters that "HELPING IS FUTILE." The callous director of the school is also shown reading a book entitled *The Fountainhead Diet*. Showing the enduring nature of her influence, another reference to Rand 17 years later in the 2009 episode, "Four Great Women and a Manicure," was a decidedly more biting lampoon. Not only do characters refer to *The Fountainhead* as "the Bible of right-wing losers," but Rand's physical appearance is ridiculed, yet again, when the elderly woman reading her novel says, "The guy (Rand) on the book jacket is one sexy slice of beefcake." Though contemptuous in its satire on Rand, *The Fountainhead* is the third piece of literature referenced in the episode, mentioning her novel among literary masterpieces, *Macbeth* and *Snow White*. *The Simpsons'* recurring fixation on Rand would not end there, as the Academy Award nominated short, "The Longest Daycare," focuses again on the "Ayn Rand School for Tots." This time, in a critique of Rand's reverence for great individuals who she sees as superior in many ways to the average person, Maggie is set apart from the "Gifted" children and placed in an area of the daycare that is

marked off for kids who are “Nothing Special.” Though laughter has often been used by Rand’s opponents as a means of demeaning her and lessening her importance, her reach and her sales numbers continue to grow.

The argument most often propagated by her dissenters in the media is that, though she and her philosophy of Objectivism are relevant enough to be the focus of their programs and articles, she should be viewed as someone who is both an intellectual juvenile and socially irrelevant. The most glaring example of this comes in the form of a 2014 article in the widely read, left-leaning online periodical, *Salon*, entitled “Free markets killed capitalism: Ayn Rand, Ronald Reagan, Wal-Mart, Amazon and the 1 percent’s sick triumph over us all.” The average reader of this article would be inclined to surmise from Rand’s prominent position in the headline that she would be the subject of a good portion of the article’s content. However, this lengthy piece which derides free market capitalism, of which Rand was an ardent proponent, and comes in the form of a question and answer session of more than 8,100 words, focuses almost exclusively on the history of monopolies in America and the Reagan administration’s overhaul of the country’s antitrust laws. In this drawn out commentary, Rand is mentioned just once outside of the title itself, and her novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, named only twice. Why, then, does her name appear in headline? Why, too, does her name and the title of her novel appear in the tags that link to the piece? The most obvious deduction is that this is due to the fact that the presence of her name will draw more readers to the article. Though her critics seek to downplay her growing significance, the use of her name in the title as click-bait is proof that, more than thirty-five years after her death, she continues to be an intriguing and influential public figure that draws attention to any story, editorial, or interview that brings her up. The solitary comment about Rand in the write-up perfectly encompasses her critics’ contention that her relevance is irrelevant, “Everybody talks about *Atlas Shrugged*, nobody pays close attention to it” (Frank).

During a 2014 episode of HBO’s *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, Rand is brought up again in an attempt to convince the audience that she is someone who they should ignore. During a segment asking “How Is This Still a Thing?” it is explained that Rand is trite and should be treated as an insignificant adolescent, “Three decades after

her death, the writer, Ayn Rand, is still the subject of serious debate...Ayn Rand became famous for her philosophy of Objectivism, which is a nice way of saying: being a selfish asshole...[she] has always been popular with teenagers, but she's something you're supposed to grow out of." Though it may perplex her detractors, she continues to be very much a thing and something that many influential leaders never seem to grow out of.

Politics

Ayn Rand is not only one of the most widely read authors amongst politicians on both sides of the aisle, but recent statements made in interviews and speeches tell us that she has had a fundamental influence on leaders at the highest levels of all three branches of the American government. "The very witty Gore Vidal once remarked of Ayn Rand that she's the only writer whom everyone in Congress has actually read" (Bell-Villada 227). Though the impact of the pervasive reading of Rand by the American political class stretches back to her fan, President Ronald Reagan, and her close friend, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan in the 1980's, her acolytes have never occupied so many positions of power as they do at this very moment in 2017. With the ascendancy of her enthusiasts, Rand has undoubtedly become the full-fledged philosophical figurehead of the modern Republican Party, and, curiously, such inspiration is attributed to her two major works of fiction, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, and not to her extensive work of non-fiction – these two tangential topics will be covered at more length in later sections. Since the Republicans claimed victories in elections across the country at the local, state, and national levels during the 2016 elections, this means that Rand is now arguably the most influential philosophical and literary figure of the 21st century.

Eight term Wisconsin congressman and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Paul Ryan, has admitted on several occasions that Rand has had an immeasurable influence on his way of thinking. Speaker Ryan currently holds the highest position in the Legislative Branch and he is third in the line of succession for the Presidency. He has established himself as a leader of his party, even kindling talks of a

future presidential run. Ryan, generally viewed as a budgetary wonk and the face of the Republican effort to reduce federal spending, has had to shoulder attacks from opponents of cutting expenditures which have included television ads portraying him pushing an elderly woman in a wheelchair off a cliff. At the age of just 47, Ryan is already more than halfway through his second decade in Washington, and was tapped to be the vice presidential nominee for the Republican party in 2012. He arrived in Washington as a young man and has attributed his quick rise, in no small part, to the influence that Ayn Rand has had on his life, saying, “The reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand” (Chait). Each and every Ryan intern is required to read *Atlas Shrugged*, which is no surprise given the novel’s more economically geared theme of the dangers of bureaucratic overreach. His open support of Rand’s philosophy and his admission that she has greatly inspired him has left him open to the same bitter scrutiny that Rand faced throughout her lifetime. In an April 2011 article in *Newsweek* entitled “War on the Weak: How the GOP came to view the poor as parasites—and the rich as our rightful rulers,” Jonathan Chait attacks Rand as having been comparable to the cult leader and science fiction writer, L. Ron Hubbard. Chait went on to infer that her influence on Speaker Ryan had turned him into a heartless ideologue and, at times, an outright liar. Once chosen to run shoulder-to-shoulder with Mitt Romney during the 2012 presidential campaign, the firestorm brought about by Ryan’s past statements of support for Rand became too much for the long-time fan to handle. Under mounting pressure from the Christian base of his own party due to Rand’s staunch advocacy of abortion, after having espoused the virtues of Rand’s writings for years, Speaker Ryan did an “about-face,” stating, “I reject her philosophy. It’s an atheistic philosophy. It reduces human interactions down to mere contracts and it is antithetical to my worldview” (Haq). Politics have now forced him to backtrack, but it’s clear that Speaker Ryan’s philosophy was shaped in no small part by Rand’s moral arguments for *laissez-faire* capitalism. Those ideas are now taking effect in the real world as the highest ranking official in the Legislative Branch currently works to craft and pass trillions of dollars worth of healthcare and economic policy, no doubt in closer accord with Rand’s beliefs than any other prominent thinker. Though her influence on Ryan is somewhat philosophical in nature, it seems that he is drawn more toward her free market

principles, like those depicted in *Atlas Shrugged*, than her overall heroic sense of life. However, two of the most powerful leaders of the other branches of the American government have admitted that the Romantic sense of life and staunch individualism on full display in *The Fountainhead* are what truly resonate with them and drive them.

Associate Justice of the Supreme Court and renowned conservative thinker, Clarence Thomas, has credited Ayn Rand with helping him to concretize his beliefs and showing him how to be courageous in moments of great strife. Thomas is currently the second longest tenured justice on the Court, and, with the passing of Justice Antonin Scalia in February of 2016, he is now widely regarded as the greatest living torchbearer for the textualist, originalist judicial philosophy. In Thomas' memoir, *My Grandfather's Son*, he notes that Rand's influence on him had less to do with shaping his political views than it did with giving him the strength to stay true to his own beliefs:

It was around this time [his third year of high school] that I read Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. Rand preached a philosophy of radical individualism that she called Objectivism. While I didn't fully accept its tenets, her vision of the world made more sense to me than that of my left-wing friends...The question was how much courage I could muster up to express my individuality. What I wanted was for everyone – the government, the racists, the activists, the students, even Daddy – to leave me alone so that I could finally start thinking for myself. (62)

Clearly not overtly ideological in nature, Rand has clearly had a profound impact on the Associate Justice by helping him to find the guts to *begin* expressing his individuality and start thinking for himself. This, however, was not a transitory phase for Thomas, but became a lasting and consistent approach at looking at the world with intellectual independence. Rand and, more specifically, *The Fountainhead* maintain such a special place in Thomas' life that all of his new law clerks are obligated to attend a viewing party of the film at his home each summer. During a speech at the University of Tennessee in 2010, Thomas explained why he continues this tradition every year:

The reason I force my law clerks to watch it is not to get them caught up in that so much, but actually to teach them an attitude: That there are a lot of hydraulic pressures in Washington that have a certain set of views or they have policy preferences and then convert those to legal rulings. I don't like that virus in the work that we do. So I require them to watch it so there is an attitude adjustment: That I have no problem being the only one. That I have no problem, and this isn't just because you're alone doesn't mean you're wrong, it means you're alone. And it's sort of that movie that is just to show an attitude that if you think you're right, there's nothing wrong with being the only one. ("Individuality")

Justice Thomas went on to explain that this "attitude," what Rand referred to as a sense of life, helped him to develop a concept of the individual and "the integrity of the individual" that gave him the strength to combat racial stereotypes during his life as a young black lawyer in the South, as well as withstand the political maelstrom that whirls around the Supreme Court. Furthermore, he took time to mention that these concepts, which he first discovered and embraced when he was just a teenager, are "still relevant" given the ever evolving nature of human groupthink and stereotyping, thus why he keeps showing *The Fountainhead* film each and every summer. It is crucial to observe that, unlike her sway on Speaker Ryan, Rand's influence on Justice Thomas has not been doctrinal, but has manifested itself more as a motivating romantic, heroic sense of life. This has less to do with the judgments he reaches than it does with *how* he goes about drawing those conclusions. Finally, and possibly most importantly, one must note the fact that, yet again, it is Rand's fiction that holds the most meaning for Justice Thomas and not her many works of non-fiction. As a man who must focus on logic, argumentation, and legal precedent, it is curious that he is moved so deeply by a Romantic novel such as *The Fountainhead*. The explanations for this peculiar pattern amongst businessmen, economists, artists, politicians, etc. will be explored at length in a later section of this dissertation. In the meantime, having already taken into account Rand's enormous effect on two of the most powerful figures in the Legislative and Judicial branches of the American government, the Executive must now be considered.

Overlooked due to the countless controversies and wild whirlwinds of the 2016 United States Presidential campaign was a succinct admission that now President Trump is also an “Ayn Rand fan.” It is no surprise that the brash man who made his billions as a real estate mogul would delight in *The Fountainhead*’s tales of a bold architect who goes it alone to construct gargantuan buildings that touch the sky. What is unexpected, though, is that Trump’s affinity for *The Fountainhead* has less to do with his chosen profession than it does with Rand’s depiction of individualism and a Romantic sense of life. In an interview with Kirsten Powers in April of 2016, Trump describes the novel thusly, “It relates to business (and) beauty (and) life and inner emotions. That book relates to...everything” [parenthesis and ellipsis in the original]. For a man who is often accused of being a playboy only capable of superficial thought, it is interesting that he takes away beauty, life, and inner emotions from the novel instead of shallow recollections of cool buildings and liberal sexuality. When Powers went on to ask Trump for his thoughts on the book’s theme about the “tyranny of groupthink,” his answer was essentially Randian both in its essence and in its rhetoric. He responded by recalling a conversation that he had recently had with a reporter, “How does it feel to have done what you have done? I said what have I done. He said nobody ever in the history of the country has done what you have done. And I said, well, if I lose, then no big deal. And he said no, no, if you lose, it doesn’t matter because this will be talked about forever. And I said it will be talked about more if I win.” Trump’s reply contains the feistiness of Ayn Rand and the cocky self-assurance of Howard Roark. In fact, he relates so closely with Roark’s struggles that he says that the same type of collective attack Roark faces in the novel is “what is happening here” to him during his campaign. Additionally, one must again take note that the allegedly stingy and admittedly crony businessman conspicuously does not espouse the virtues of free market economics or explicitly expound upon the perils of altruism as detailed in Rand’s non-fiction. Instead, his remarks are indicative of the Romantic sense of life intrinsic in Rand’s individualistic heroes, particularly Howard Roark. According to the statements above, it seems that, to a significant degree, *The Fountainhead* has been a source of motivation and intellectual clarity for President Donald Trump.

Rand’s substantial influence on three of the most powerful figures in the American government is now a matter of public record and there are doubtlessly

countless others in elected office and bureaucratic posts who are quietly moved by Rand's work in some form. These household names and faceless functionaries are currently molding public policy that will affect the lives of hundreds of millions of people for generations to come, and they are doing so, to one degree or another, with the ideas of Ayn Rand in mind. Thus, more than three decades after her passing, her ideas are now being practically implemented more than ever before, and for this reason she has arguably become more influential than any living person in all of American politics. It is of particular importance to note, however that the officeholders who hold Rand in high esteem almost always have two things in common, they are almost exclusively members of the Republican Party and they nearly invariably cite her fiction, increasingly mentioning *The Fountainhead*, as the writings that truly inspire them. What's more is that, though there are signs that her writings are finally beginning to be recognized internationally, her enormous popularity and improbably massive scope of influence in the wide variety of aforementioned fields have been confined to the borders of the United States of America. What is it, then, in the heart of the American reader that provokes a strong and enduring emotional connection to Rand's novels? And why are her writings both indicative of and a driving source for the already deep yet widening partisan divide in the United States? To answer these questions and fully grasp the root causes of the Ayn Rand phenomenon, one must understand the ideas of American Individualism upon which the country was founded, Rand's lofty ambition to complete the philosophical journey that the Founders began, and the American Progressives who adamantly reject both Rand's Objectivism and traditional American values.

CHAPTER 3

American Individualism vs. Progressivism:

The History of the Modern American Sociopolitical Dichotomy

One central idea more than any other defines and ties together the American philosophy with that of Ayn Rand: Individualism. It is no coincidence that her novels resonate with the American people because she designed them to mirror the American sense of life and build an exhaustive moral base for the incomplete philosophy of the American Founders who proclaimed the sovereignty of the individual in the opening words of the Declaration of Independence and codified individual rights into the Constitution of the United States of America. American Individualism grew from the seed of the Classical Liberal philosophy that was sewn by figures such as Cicero and Aristotle, and that more fully matured during the Enlightenment with the works of John Locke. Millennia of historical observation and philosophical inquiry culminated in the Founders' eloquent summation of individualism in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. These three brief paragraphs would define the American Idea and would become the Polaris which key leaders would rely upon for guidance during the most pivotal points in American History. In addition, having been etched so deeply into the American DNA, the literature and American myth making of the 19th century, especially in the form of the tall tale, reflected and further propagated the notion that free and self-governing individuals can achieve extraordinary feats. The veracity of the idea of the supremacy of the individual combined with the practical implementation of equal legal protections of individual natural rights formed the philosophical cornerstone necessary for the maintenance of the very limited form of American republicanism. Slightly more than a century after the Founding, a confluence of groundbreaking theories including Darwinism and Marxism caught the eye of many in the American intelligentsia and led them to question the efficacy of their country's system of

governance. The manifestation of these theories in the political realm then sparked the Progressive movement which rejected traditional American values, redefined the relationship between the individual and the American government, and has had more practical significance in the establishment and procedures of contemporary public institutions than any other mass movement in American history. In the 1930's, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, widely recognized as the most effective figure in all of American Progressivism, transformed the United States by massively growing the federal government, by centralizing power into the Executive by creating many of the modern bureaucratic agencies, and by implementing programs such as Social Security which are still the center of the political discourse in the 21st century. From this moment forward, the United States' political spectrum has been split upon a constantly widening divide between those who continue to embrace American Individualism and its corollary of a limited federal government and those who reject traditional Americanism in favor of the more European socialistic style of the Progressives. In the eighty years since Roosevelt, two people have been gradually to positions as philosophical figurehead of these rival schools of thought, Ayn Rand as the sage of American Individualism and Saul Alinsky as the master of Progressive tactician. Alinsky was an in-your-face and bumptious community organizer who gained a name for himself for his effective schemes in the rough-and-tumble world of Chicago politics. He later used these experiences to pen what would become the modern Progressive manifesto, *Rules for Radicals* (1971). *Rules for Radicals* listed methods for messaging and coordinating populist uprisings with the reworded Marxist goal of taking from the "Haves" and giving to the "Have Nots." Rand's influence, however, now the counterbalance to Alinsky, was not born out of a political manifesto, but instead out of her two epic novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. Her fiction resonated with both the hopes and the uneasiness of millions of Americans concerned with the sweeping changes brought about by the Progressive movement. As Philip Gordon put it in his article in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, "Rand's overwhelming fear of anything collective harmonized with the American myth of rugged individualism" (701). To fully understand the complex dynamics of the current American sociopolitical dichotomy and how Rand became the luminary of the American right, one must begin by taking an in depth look at the roots and evolution of American Individualism.

The American Founders and Locke's State of Nature

Ayn Rand's life story of escaping violence and suffering in her homeland to find freedom and prosperity is encouraging and extraordinary, but it can hardly be considered unique in the history of the United States. As an individualist of the first order, Rand claimed on many occasions that she had not been influenced by other philosophers, but that her worldview had always been her own and had only become more refined as she grew over time:

From the time that I can remember myself, I was two and a half, and from that time on to the present I never changed my convictions, only at two and a half I didn't know as much as I know now, but the fundamental approach was the same. I've never had to change. Because it's true. Because it corresponds to reality. Because it is the right philosophy. By true I mean it corresponds to reality, therefore it permits me to deal with reality properly. (Snyder)

Though she may have claimed that her philosophy was a construct all her own, her extensive knowledge and deep admiration of the American Founders shows that they had a profound influence on her way of thinking. It is clear that they were not just the forefathers of the nation which she came to love, they laid the philosophical groundwork of American Individualism upon which Rand built her philosophy of Objectivism two centuries later. In her 1974 essay, "Philosophy: Who Needs It?" Rand expressed her reverence for America and its founding ideals, "The United States of America is the greatest, the noblest and, in its original founding principles, the *only* moral country in the history of the world" (13). Though she herself wished to be seen as a philosophical outlier and an original, an objective comparison of the ideas proposed by the American Founders with those espoused by Rand finds that she followed in the footsteps of a long line of American Individualists. Due to the effectiveness of her literary style in portraying these values, she has become the 21st century torchbearer for American Individualism and continues to grow in popularity as the face of this philosophical lineage.

Rand viewed the Founding Fathers as men of great minds, not just politicians or military leaders. For her, they were noble philosophers who then took the unique step in history of enshrining into law their belief in the sanctity of individual liberty and the right to one's own life. Rand expresses her sentiments thusly:

The Founding Fathers were neither passive, death-worshipping mystics nor mindless, power-seeking looters; as a political group, they were a phenomenon unprecedented in history: they were *thinkers* who were also men of action...They had rejected the doctrine of suffering as man's metaphysical fate, they proclaimed man's right to the pursuit of happiness and were determined to establish on earth the conditions required for man's proper existence, by the "unaided" power of their intellect. (*For the New Intellectual*, 25)

The Founders' concept of the "conditions required for man's proper existence" on earth, which Rand came to embrace, was derived through a thorough study of the works of the English Enlightenment philosopher, John Locke.

Two rival schools of thought regarding man's behavior in a State of Nature emerged from the Enlightenment and would come to be known as Social Contract Theory. The first was described in the masterwork of Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651). Hobbes theorized that reality was subjective and that men in a hypothetical State of Nature would be in a constant state of brutal war – might means right. He described men as self-centered to a violent and malevolent fault, and the only possible means of escaping this horrifying and destructive world was to hand over one's liberty to an all-powerful sovereign entity. Professor Steven Smith of Yale University describes Hobbes' concept of sovereign power:

The Hobbesian sovereign...are not just the enforcers of the rules or the interpreters of the rules, the sovereign is also the creator, the shaper and maker of the rules. And Hobbes draws from this the startling conclusion, in many ways the infamous conclusion that the sovereign can never act unjustly...Because the sovereign is the source of law and the sovereign is

the source of the rules of justice. Therefore, Hobbes concludes, he can never act unjustly. (Smith)

Dr. Smith goes on to describe Hobbes' startling example of his theoretical sovereign. Hobbes recounts the Biblical story in which David kills Uriah so that he may sleep with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. According to Hobbes' rationale, because David is the sovereign king of Israel, he has done "no injustice to Uriah" since he not only makes the rules, he is the sole decider of what is right and wrong. Hobbes thusly argued that, though it may at times be severe and difficult, it must be more advantageous for individuals to enter into the Social Contract by ceding their liberties to the sovereign rather than living in his harsh and barbaric vision of the State of Nature.

The second and opposing view of man in a State of Nature and the Social Contract was depicted in John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1690). Locke's State of Nature is also one of complete individual liberty without an established government to create rules and bring justice to those who violate them. Unlike the one envisioned by Hobbes, however, morality still exists amongst men in their natural state. According to Locke, inherent in men, even in a complete State of Nature, is a moral code which he dubbed the Law of Nature. In Locke's opinion, since all men are created equal by God, they are each "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," and human beings can know this because God has given each individual a conscience and a rational faculty, both of which may be ignored but whose existence cannot be denied. Says Locke, "But though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence [spelling per the original text]...The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions" (Locke 3). It was Locke's belief that each man has a natural, God-given right to his own life and, accordingly, he has the right to spend his time on earth any way he sees fit, as long as he does not infringe upon the natural rights of others. Additionally, if one's rights were to be violated by another individual, Locke concludes that the injured party would have a natural right to bring the offender to justice. The Social Contract enters into Locke's theory in the form of a promise between men to cede a minimal bit of their liberty to what he called the "body politic." The

objective of this deal is to protect their lives, liberty, and happiness from the fears common in an outright anarchical environment. This limited body politic consists of three parts: few and just laws created by a legislature, an executive to enforce the laws, and a judiciary to adjudicate them. With this restricted and balanced form of governance, the issue of sovereignty becomes a key difference between Locke's version of the Social Contract and that of Hobbes. Even after an individual enters into a Social Contract, Locke contends that not only is the individual still the sovereign, but the individual retains the right to throw off his government and either live freely in the State of Nature or establish a new and just compact with other groups of individuals. Another fundamental divergence between the two philosophers is that Locke does not consider his State of Nature to be a hypothetical situation, but one that has been commonplace throughout human history:

Since all princes and rulers of independent governments all through the world are in a state of nature, 'tis plain the world never was, nor ever will be, without numbers of men in that state... The promises and bargains...between the two men in the desert island... [or] in the woods of America, are binding to them though they are perfectly in a state of nature in reference to one another. For truth and keeping of faith belong to men as men, and not as members of society. (7)

The men "in the woods of America" would quickly become intimately familiar with Locke's thesis and they would soon after find themselves in a unique moment in history with the opportunity to practically implement his ideas.

The American Founders extensively studied and would come to concur wholeheartedly with Locke's theory of a more benevolent view of the State of Nature. Thus when abuses by a distant and tyrannical king proved too gravely injurious, they found themselves in the rare position of effectively throwing off such malicious rule. They took seriously their duty to form a government under which men could live as freely as possible and thrive or fail according to their own rational thoughts and hard work. They were so inspired by Locke's *Second Treatise* that the preamble of the Declaration of Independence is considered an articulate summary of his work, and the structure of the Declaration is in accordance with Locke's theory by naming all the

unaddressed grievances as the Founders' reasoning for ending their lengthy political compact with the British kingdom. Ayn Rand's friend and heir, Leonard Peikoff describes not only the impact Locke had on the Founders, but the momentous profundity of their concerted philosophical shift:

In the modern world, under the influence of the pervasive new climate, a succession of thinkers developed a new conception of the nature of government. The most important of these men and the one with the greatest influence on America was John Locke. The political philosophy of Locke bequeathed to the Founding Fathers is what gave rise to the new nation's distinctive institutions...Throughout history the state had been regarded, implicitly or explicitly, as the ruler of the individual...to which he must submit. The Founding Fathers challenged this primordial notion. They started with the premise of the *primacy and sovereignty of the individual*...Whether or not any social organization exists, each man possesses certain *individual rights*. [Emphasis in the original] (*The Ominous Parallels* 109)

It is of note that Locke, the American Founders, and Rand arrived at the same conclusion regarding the sovereignty of individuals and the nature of man, but it is also necessary to take into account that they arrived at these determinations through a strikingly similar epistemological method.

Late in her career, Rand took a break from writing fiction to dedicate herself to the full development of her philosophy of Objectivism as she published dozens of books and articles, and voiced her ideas in public speeches and interviews. During this time, she penned an essay entitled "The Objectivist Ethics" which one can find in her 1964 book, *The Virtue of Selfishness*. In this essay, Rand restates the Lockean theory of man in a State of Nature and accepts his concept of an innate moral code, but she takes the next step of logically analyzing what it is in the nature of men that necessitates Natural Law. As a staunch atheist, Rand could not accept Locke's assertion that Natural Law was handed down to human beings from a higher power, so she employed what she believed to be "man's only means of grasping reality and of acquiring knowledge": reason (*Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* 162). Rand began with

what she regarded as a logically deduced axiom for all living organisms, “Metaphysically, *life* is the only phenomenon that is an end in itself: a value gained and kept by a constant process of action...The fact that a living entity is, determines what it ought to do” (*The Virtue of Selfishness* 16). Having established that life is “an end in itself,” Rand then classified living organisms based on what they *are*, their cognitive capacities and their means of survival:

Consciousness – for those organisms which possess it – is the basic means of survival. The simpler organisms, such as plants, can survive by means of their automatic physical functions. The higher organisms, such as animals and man, cannot...A plant can obtain its food from the soil in which it grows. An animal has to hunt for it. Mans has to produce it...The range of actions required for the survival of the higher organisms is wider: it is proportionate to the range of their *consciousness*...the faculty of *retaining* sensations, which is the faculty of *perception*. (17-18).

Thus Rand demonstrates that all living organisms must function in accordance with their nature, what they *are*. What, then, differentiates human beings from every other living thing? In Rand’s opinion, the difference hinges on the issue of man’s free will, “an animal has no choice in the standard of value directing its actions: its senses provide it with an *automatic* code of values...what benefits or endangers its life...Man is the only living entity born without any guarantee of *remaining* conscious at all...Thinking is not an automatic function. In any hour and issue of his life, man is free to think or to evade that effort” (18-20).

The volitional nature of man is a central pillar in Objectivism which leads to one of the more polemical aspects of her writings – a certain disdain that Rand and many of her fictional characters feel for the average human being while simultaneously experiencing a reverence for great individual thinkers and producers. Her contempt for the average person is born from the fact that she believes that most human beings do not fully utilize their rational faculties. In her view, since they choose to reject the capability for conscious thought that is ingrained in man’s nature, they in turn become something that is less than human:

Man is free to choose not to be conscious, but not free to escape the penalty of unconsciousness: destruction. Man is the only living species that has the power to act as his own destroyer – and that is the way he has acted through most of his history...If some men do not choose to think, but survive by imitating and repeating, like trained animals...such looters are parasites incapable of survival, who exists by destroying those who *are* capable, those who are pursuing a course of action proper to man. (21-22)

Rand considers “a course of action proper to man” to be productive work through active consciousness with the *long-term* objective of sustaining one’s life. She clarifies that man’s survival, his only end in itself, must be attained through thoughtful and purposeful continued planning and action, unlike other animals which survive only through the fulfillment of a momentary instinctual desires with no thought of how to preempt the next inevitable need. According to Rand, if a man pursues this proper course of meaningful action, he will attain true and lasting happiness. For her, happiness is a byproduct of a life well live, not an objective in itself.

With the *pursuit* of happiness having already been clearly declared by the Founders in the Declaration of Independence, and with a just and moral Law of Nature having been detailed by John Locke centuries before, why did Rand feel it was necessary to restate their pronouncements in more scientific and philosophical terms? She felt that her Objectivism was the explicit ethical code essential to the contemporary defense of the Founding ideals:

Every political system is based on and derived from a theory of ethics – and that the Objectivist ethics is the moral base needed by that politico-economic system which, today, is being destroyed all over the world, destroyed precisely for lack of a *moral*, philosophical defense and validation: the original American system, *Capitalism*. If it perishes, it will perish by default, undiscovered and unidentified: no other subject has ever been hidden by so many distortions, misconceptions and misrepresentations. (31-32)

It is perplexing that Rand has been so effectively characterized for more almost a century as a philosophical outlier given such a direct and open declaration of her purpose: to produce an exhaustive moral code for the protection of the Founding American values. Who, then, were the American Founders and what were the values they held that Rand felt such a profound need to protect?

The American Founding Fathers were a small group of farmers, lawyers, surveyors, publishers, and military generals from the various thirteen American colonies who came together to declare their people's independence from the tyrannical and distant rule of the British King George III. The Founding Fathers formed a new country of their own, based on the idea that a man lives best when he lives freely. Amongst the many American Founders is the philosopher statesman who crafted the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, the inventor and businessman, Benjamin Franklin, the military general, George Washington, the Father of the Constitution and co-author of the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison, and the patriot who insisted on the explicit affirmation of man's liberties in the Bill of Rights, George Mason. Even before the United States formally came into existence, these men, along with many of their lesser known counterparts, proudly proclaimed to the world in the Declaration of Independence the concept that would come to define the soul of the nation:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

In these two brief statements, the Founders exalted the almost century old theory of John Locke's natural moral code. They also asserted that their new country would be the first in history to be founded not upon arbitrary monarchical bloodlines or the dictatorship of the mightiest sword, but on the idea that a just government is both limited and meant to protect the natural rights of individual human beings. In these first words of this first founding document, the American Founders set the course for a nation that would not just be a social collection of people from a delineated geographical area with similar linguistic and cultural heritages, it would be a nation that they hoped would stand for something more eternal. The original American Idea "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights" was an objective issued by the Founders toward which the nation should strive. The veracity of this bold assertion has been tested at every pivotal point in the country's advancement, and the people's sincere belief in its truth has led them, slowly but surely, closer to that ultimate ideal. These words also marked the first steps along the path of what would become a storied tradition of American Individualism. For the first time in history, the sovereignty and supremacy of the individual had been decreed, and the blessings of a government that protected the "conditions required for man's proper existence" were quickly and broadly enjoyed relative to nearly every other civilization in history.

With this drastic shift toward constitutional republicanism, the American people widely adopted the ideals most valued by the Founders, most notably that of the individual right to generate and retain one's own property. The American Founders believed that the right to keep one's property was a necessary protection for the maintenance of a free society, "property is the fruit of one's labor. The ability to use, enjoy, and exclusively possess the fruits of one's own labor is the basis for a society in which individuals are free from oppression" (Marzulla 2). The change in governmental structure accompanied by a shift in the treatment of the individual also brought about more practical and readily apparent improvements in the daily lives of people all over the world. The standard of living of the average European or American in the 21st century, with running water, electricity, internet connection, and much more, is far higher even than that of the oppressive kings who ruled at the time of the American founding. Though daily life has undergone a dramatic transformation for Westerners

over the last two centuries, life was relatively similar for the average person in the 18th century as it was for those who lived dozens of centuries before. The only significant development to explain this exponential advancement in human wellbeing and technology is the practical implementation of the enlightened concepts of man's true nature. Once again, as Ayn Rand put it, "the conditions required for man's proper existence." Though the application of the Founding principles allowed individuals to prosper and innovate, as noted by Alexis de Tocqueville on "Why the Americans are so Restless in the Midst of their Prosperity," such rapid success tended to cause men never to feel "complete felicity" and to soon reach even higher, both economically and morally:

In America I saw the freest and most enlightened men placed in the happiest circumstances that the world affords, it seemed to me as if a cloud habitually hung upon their brow, and I thought them serious and almost sad, even in their pleasures...At first sight there is something surprising in this strange unrest of so many happy men, restless in the midst of abundance. The spectacle itself, however, is as old as the world; the novelty is to see a whole people furnish an exemplification of it.

The unquiet American soul not only provoked constant enterprising labors, but the moral element of such restless abundance manifested itself by the expedition of social reforms. Citizens whose right to speak freely was now protected under the Bill of Rights attempted to instigate progress toward the ultimate goal put forth in the Declaration of Independence – that "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights."

As America expanded westward and the living conditions of US born citizens and immigrants alike improved, the focus of the American moral compass swiftly turned to the men and women whose natural rights were not legally protected under the newly established Constitution. The practice of slavery was a major point of contention at the Constitutional Convention during the hot summer of 1787. Many of the Founders realized that the future abolition of slavery was inevitable and that its continued existence at the outset of country would be an eternal black eye on the face of America. Thus they included a clause that would act as a time bomb for the institution of slavery,

setting a limit on the importation of new slaves to twenty years after the ratification of the Constitution. Having followed through with the deadline by banning slave trafficking in 1807, it would take another 58 years, a Civil War, and a leader of historic stature to end slavery completely in the United States. In a country whose founding cornerstone was the notion of the rights and merits of each individual, the institution of slavery that depended on the legal and social persecution of millions of individuals based solely on their race was antithetical to those core values and quickly became an unbearable point of political and moral division. It is fitting that the American Civil War would be fought not over regional jealousies, or military coups, or ethnic land disputes as were the impetuses of civil wars in many other parts of the world, but over the Declaration's promise that all its inhabitants should live freely and enjoy the same constitutional protections as the rest of its citizens. Just as the Founders did at the time of the Revolution, when America arrived at this breaking point and needed an extraordinary leader to step forward, one principled and courageous man rose to the occasion.

Fulfilling the Promise of the Declaration

Throughout the country's history, whenever the American people arrived at a crucial turning point, they would refer back to the ideals upon which the nation was founded, relying on the words of the Declaration of Independence like a North Star to guide them toward the ultimate goal of equal protection of all its citizens' natural rights. As a young congressman elected in 1846 to represent the people of the state of Illinois, Lincoln became a household name throughout the country due to his frank and fearless opposition to President James Polk's decision to go to war with Mexico. After he left Congress, tensions began to rise regarding the spread of slavery and the continuation of the dreadful tradition altogether. As this heated debate was about to drive the United States into all out war, Lincoln, who publicly argued against the spread of slavery, was elected in 1860 to the office of the presidency. Just over a month after his inauguration, rebel soldiers from the South attacked Fort Sumter, thrusting the US into a bloody civil war. At first, Lincoln's sole objective was to maintain the Union by refusing to recognize the right of the southern states to secede. He soon realized, though, that the

war would have to take on a more profound significance if he wanted to keep foreign powers from recognizing the Confederate south's sovereignty and aiding them in their battle to split the country in two. Thus, on January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which declared free the millions of slaves in southern rebel states. From that point forward, the war took on a deeper meaning for Lincoln and for the United States. The war became the inevitable fruition of the pledge made the day that the Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence.

Lincoln invariably leaned upon the Declaration as a philosophical crutch during this chaotic time, and his conviction in the righteousness of its tenets created the first considerable link in the chain of American Individualist thought. Throughout his career and especially during his renowned debates with Senator Stephen Douglas, Lincoln referred back to the providential nature of the precepts set forth in the Declaration, calling them "sacred principles" and even stating that the Declaration was an "immortal emblem of Humanity" ("Lincoln on the Declaration of Independence"). He felt that his role as President of the United States at the most tumultuous moment in its history gave him the opportunity to effect change for the betterment of all mankind and to finally breathe real life into the words espoused in that first founding document. Biographer, Richard Current, describes Lincoln's reliance on the Declaration, "Lincoln passionately believed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. To him, these documents were not merely historical relics; they embodied fundamental ideals, ideals in the process of realization, ideals that formed the basis for his political thinking" (xiii). Lincoln esteemed the principles of the Declaration so much that in his seminal speech, the Gettysburg Address, he referenced the Declaration as the United States' starting point, even though it preceded the entire Revolution and the establishment of the Constitution. During his somber speech at the battlefield in Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, he voiced his sincerely held belief in the eternal profundity of the battle at hand, he recognized the tender fragility of the American experiment, and he pronounced the grand importance of the ideals upon which the country was founded:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that “all men are created equal.”

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure.

...It is rather for us, the living, we here be dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom; and that this government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

“A new birth of freedom” was certainly upon the nation as the founding principles were brought back to life and used as the justification for the abolition slavery. Just over two years after these famous words were spoken, the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified, ending slavery in the United States once and for all. Not only did black Americans receive their freedom with the 13th Amendment, but black men were given the right to vote with the ratification of the 15th Amendment in 1870, leaving just one group of people in the United States still left without the franchise.

Immediately following the Civil War, the fight for women’s right to partake in the republican processes of the country began to gear up. Having already advocated for women’s suffrage for years, Susan B. Anthony took part in bold civil disobedience by voting in the 1872 presidential election. In layman’s terms, she was charged with the crime of lacking the proper genitalia to legally vote. Her trial for that crime became a national spectacle and sparked a public debate regarding an issue of civil rights whose time was long overdue. In an effort to garner public support preceding her trial, Anthony went from town to town giving a speech entitled “Is it a Crime for a Citizen of the United States to Vote?” In her speech, she used the Enlightenment argument of natural individual rights to assert that voting was a natural right that each individual possessed as a vital part of his or her consent to those who govern. The primary defense

for her assertion, as it had been for liberty-seeking individualists before her, was the Declaration of Independence:

The Declaration of Independence...propose(s) to protect the people in exercise of their God-given rights...

“All men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Here is no shadow of government authority over rights, nor exclusion of any from their full and equal enjoyment. Here is pronounced the right of all men, and “consequently,” as the Quaker preacher said, “of all women,” to a voice in the government. And here, in this very first paragraph of the declaration, is the assertion of the natural right of all to the ballot; for, how can “the consent of the governed” be given, if the right to vote be denied.

Anthony, like the Founders and Lincoln before her, knew that the American Constitution was imperfect due to the political nature of the document and, thus, focused her discourse on the Founders’ ideal aspirations as proposed in the preamble of the Declaration. When making the case for women’s suffrage, Anthony relied on the words of the Declaration just as American leaders had done, and would continue to do, at every major turning point in the country’s history. She kept fighting until her passing in 1906, never getting to witness the fruition of her life’s work. Though she did not live to see it, her efforts were not in vain. In 1920, the United States passed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, guaranteeing women the equal right to vote.

Having been the rallying cry for the major American sociopolitical advancements of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Declaration would maintain its prominent place at the forefront of the American discourse throughout the 20th century, as well. During a speech marking the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, Martin Luther King, Jr., detailed the Declaration’s uniqueness at the time

of its creation and praised it as the paramount argument for the liberation of American slaves:

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed to a world organized politically and spiritually around the concept of the inequality of man that liberty was inherent in man as a living being; that he, himself, could not create a society, which could last, if it alienated freedom from man. The Emancipation Proclamation was the offspring of the Declaration of Independence. It used the force of law to uproot a social order which sought to separate liberty from a segment of humanity. (“Declaration of Independence”)

This was not the only time that King underscored the relevance of the Declaration to American and world history. At the climax of his most famous speech, “I Have a Dream,” a speech which would come to be known by many as the greatest American speech of the 20th century, King referred directly to the Declaration of Independence, “I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed, ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’” King’s words prove that he believed in the promise of the Declaration and the principles of the American Founding. He continued to pave the historical and philosophical path of American Individualism by calling for human beings to be judged by the “content of their character” and not collectively prejudiced based solely on the “color of their skin.” He felt that it was the duty of the living to propagate this way of thinking and further the cause of liberty so that the American people could edge ever closer to realizing the dream set forth in that first founding document. Though the Declaration was used by King as a force for good and had been counted on to effect positive change at every major point of social improvement in American history, since the turn of the 20th century, many powerful American politicians and academics have argued against the principles of the Founding and the Declaration.

The Flip Side of the Coin: A Brief History of American Progressivism

In the closing decades of the 19th century, audacious new theories including Darwinism and Marxism took the American intelligentsia by storm and quickly morphed into the most powerful and persistent post Civil War political movement, Progressivism. The self-titled Progressives rejected the afore-unquestioned American orthodoxy of a limited central government and the supremacy of the individual in favor of a proactive and wide-reaching federal power. Progressive presidents such as Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter, and Barack Obama, have sought to remove Constitutional constraints on the federal bureaucracy and executive power in the hopes of a more agile governance like those in Europe which they wished to replicate. Norman Birnbaum, sociologist and professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, “designate(s) ‘progressivism’ to be the American equivalent of European social democracy” (471). The leaders of this movement, most notably Franklin D. Roosevelt, have been impressively effective in transforming the American system into its current form, including championing programs such as the New Deal public works and Social Security, which were essential in redefining the relationship between American citizens and their government. During the mid-20th century, as Ayn Rand busily honed her Objectivist philosophy for the defense of American Individualism, a brazen community organizer named Saul Alinsky tirelessly tinkered with tactics that would sharpen the spear of the modern Progressive movement. Alinsky’s methods are now ubiquitous throughout the American media and the Democrat Party, and his philosophical lineage leads directly to fellow Chicagoan, former President Barack Obama, and former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. The soaring 21st century ascendancy of the philosophical progeny of Rand and Alinsky illustrates that the contemporary American political landscape has bisected into two clear schools of thought headed by these individuals. To thoroughly understand Rand and her place in this modern dichotomy, one must examine the Progressive movement which she sought to oppose and its unique place in the evolution of American sociopolitical philosophy.

Though not the first American Progressive, the man who laid the groundwork and is generally regarded as the father of the movement is President Woodrow Wilson. While serving as the president of Princeton University, Wilson helped to develop a

governmental structure that paralleled the burgeoning theories on evolution. The progressive theory, which he helped to create, taught that governance should not be left to the whims of democratic elections, but should be largely controlled by experts in permanent positions, or what has come to be known as the public bureaucracy. Americans, especially the Founders, had traditionally viewed government as a dangerous but necessary tool used to protect the natural rights of individuals as each person pursued his or her own happiness. The Progressives, on the other hand, felt that once the government was filled with their appointed experts, these philosopher kings would understand better how to manage the levers of government to help guide the people to the happiness they sought:

The robust regulatory and redistributive aims of the progressive policy agenda were at odds with the natural-law theory of the founding...Like Wilson, Frank Goodnow (a progressive pioneer in constitutional and administrative theory) acknowledged that the founders' system of government "permeated by the theories of social compact and natural right," and he complained that such theories were "worse than useless," because they "retard development"...[and] inhibit the expansion of government. (Petritto 4)

The progressive repudiation of natural law brought about the most momentous sociopolitical shift in American history – the displacement of sovereignty vested in the individual into collective institutions:

For him [Wilson], public things are an aggregation of the private and individual interests that make up society. This association for mutual aid to self-development necessarily is best located in the institutions of government...Political leaders are now aware, Wilson says, that a rationally administered state is possible and that only an enlightened administration can solve disputes between various interests, such as those between capital and labor. (Zentner 582-583)

With this in mind, Wilson grew the size of the American government and implemented permanent bureaucratic agencies "to meliorate the excesses of individualism,

particularly in regard to the economic interests of the wealthy, while at the same time serving the development of individuality” (Zentner 583). Wilson’s legacy of institutionalizing the development of the individual includes the income tax, the Federal Reserve, and the United Nations. This is a weighty résumé for anyone, yet it pales in comparison the list of revolutionary programs that would be launched two decades later by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In the midst of the Great Depression, President Roosevelt enacted a package of progressive legislation that transformed American society and came to be known collectively as the New Deal. Roosevelt knew that, to accomplish his goals, it would be necessary to move beyond previously constituted checks and balances between the branches of the federal government. His New Deal changed the very nature of the American government and its relationship to the citizen, sparking a heated national dialogue that continues to mark the political divide in the United States today. Critics of Roosevelt, such as Ayn Rand, seethed with harsh rebuke while his supporters hailed him as a compassionate and visionary populist. Until he stepped foot in the Oval Office in March of 1933, the nation’s *laissez-faire* capitalist system had left private enterprise nearly unregulated, without federal interference in the quotidian experience of the average American. Roosevelt, however, believed that the best way to pull the country out of the economic turmoil of the Great Depression was to completely overhaul the economic structure and to establish a more powerful, centralized national government that could more swiftly tweak policies when deemed necessary. During his first term in office, Roosevelt grew the size and scope of the federal government with a vigorous fervor. New Deal scholar, John Hardman, explains, “Under Franklin Roosevelt, and his New Deal; the government’s role in America grew more than in any era before. During this time between 1932-1940 there were numerous examples of growth of the government. About thirty-two new government agencies were created during the eight-year period.” Roosevelt’s new institutions established Social Security, put into place far-reaching public works programs, created a federal minimum wage, and regulated countless aspects of the previously free market economy. Though progressives throughout the United States now credit Roosevelt with having rescued the United States from the depths of the Great Depression, free market proponents contend that his intervention in the daily affairs of individuals unnecessarily prolonged the nation’s

economic strife. For example, at a time when millions of Americans were suffering and struggled merely to find enough food to survive, the Roosevelt administration ordered the reduction of agricultural production and, in some cases, the destruction of food, all as part of a central plan to raise food prices with the goal of bolstering the wages of farmers. John Hardman again goes into further detail:

In 1933 Congress passed the Agriculture Adjustment Act (AAA) to provide economic relief to farmers. The AAA had a core plan to raise crop prices by paying farmers a subsidy to compensate for voluntary cutbacks in production...and the AAA encouraged farmers to plow under their abundant crops...[the AAA] was abandoned in 1936; when the tax on food processors was ruled unconstitutional.

New Deal initiatives, such as this aspect of the AAA, were the source of considerable controversy, especially given the fact that many were struck down by the Supreme Court when they were found to be illegal under the Constitution. Nevertheless, as Roosevelt's unprecedentedly long presidency wore on, several justices retired and passed away, giving him the ability to appoint progressive judges to the Court who eventually gave his policies the judicial stamp of approval. The effective implementation of Roosevelt's agenda was the realization of Woodrow Wilson's dream to shift sovereignty from the individual to the collective, public realm. Due to this progressive metamorphosis, America was a fundamentally different country than it had been just a decade before. Even so, with Roosevelt's passing in 1945, though the Democrat Party leaned heavily toward Progressivism, they were left without a dyed-in-the-wool defender of their cause for decades to come. The predictable patriotism following World War II and the overt propagandizing of traditional Americanism during the Red Scare of the 1950's led a large portion of the population to experience a philosophical homecoming of sorts, a resurrection of the conservative values typical of American Individualism and antithetical to Progressivism. It was not until the late 1960's that a militant and charismatic guide would come along to truly reignite the Progressive movement.

Saul Alinsky, the aforementioned author of the Progressive manifesto, *Rules for Radicals*, and the "dean of modern community organizing," has become the

philosophical and tactical godfather of the modern Democrat Party, having written the playbook for contemporary political strategy, and having directly influenced officials at the highest positions of power, like former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and former President Barack Obama (as cited in Engel 50). The prevailing patriotism of the 1950's was proof that, though progressives had abandoned the traditional American political order decades earlier, there was still a sense of shared cultural values around which the people endeavored to find common ground. In *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky rebuffed the search for compromise in exchange for a divide and conquer sociopolitical mentality. He envisioned both society and politics as a zero sum game, a winner-takes-all contest instead of an intercommunicative forum for working toward a common good. Prior to Alinsky, progressives were convinced that their policies would work for the betterment of all Americans. Alinsky, however, divided the people into two simple groups, the Have-Nots, whom he claimed to represent, and the Haves. According to his neo-Marxist worldview, the Haves carry the collective blame for any material or emotional woes of the Have-Nots. Alinsky then asserted that the Have-Nots are justified in using any means necessary to take back what the Haves have allegedly stolen from them. When questions of morality inevitably arose, Alinsky not only scoffed at any issue of right and wrong, he openly defended his self-branded "evil" actions. Here he quotes Henry James to get his point across, "Life *is*, in fact, a battle. Evil is insolent and strong; beauty enchanting but rare; *goodness very apt to be weak*; folly very apt to be defiant; *wickedness to carry the day*; *imbeciles to be in great places, people of sense in small*, and mankind generally unhappy [italics in the original]" (*Rules for Radicals* 14). Alinsky's disregard for any standard of morality may explain why, on the dedication page of *Rules for Radicals*, he took the time to thank the original figure of mischief and malice, the Devil himself. The acknowledgement says that Lucifer must be remembered and revered because he was "the first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom." After having mocked anyone who believes in integrity, choosing instead to give a hat tip to Satan, Alinsky then established a radical rule that proposes a sliding scale of morality that echoes the dangerous proclamations of Nietzsche regarding the ideological superiority of the transgressive *Übermensch*. Like Nietzsche before him, Alinsky stated as his sixth rule of the ethics of means and ends, that "the less important the end to be

desired, the more one can afford to engage in ethical evaluations of means” (*Rules for Radicals* 34). In terms of practical application, this statement leads to very serious repercussions. The most overt is that the leaders who ascribe to Alinsky’s teachings feel that as they acquire more power and their goals become ever more impactful, they need not worry themselves of the morality of the means they employ to realize their objectives. This is not merely an abstract academic conversation because of the immense influence obtained by followers of Alinsky.

One of the most powerful people to this point of the 21st-century, former President Barack Obama, is widely recognized as the most successful Alinsky disciple. Obama, a fellow Chicago community organizer before venturing into politics, unabashedly placed a photograph of himself on his 2008 campaign website that showed him educating students on the tactics proposed in *Rules for Radicals*. Furthermore, once he won the Democrat nomination in historic fashion that same year, Alinsky’s son applauded Obama for having been so true to his father’s instructions, “Barack Obama’s training in Chicago by the great community organizers is showing its effectiveness. It is an amazingly powerful format, and the method of my late father always works...Obama learned his lesson well. I am proud to see that my father’s model for organizing is being applied successfully” (“Son sees father’s handiwork in convention”). As Alinsky’s son correctly noted, Obama effectively employed “radical” strategies during his successful candidacy, but he continued to utilize the techniques throughout his presidency. Proof of Obama’s faith in Alinsky’s sixth rule of means and ends becomes glaring in his statements on how the legislative process works under his executive administration. Like many modern Western representative governments, the United States has a system of separated powers under which the legislature makes laws and the executive administers them. During Obama’s tenure, however, when he arrived at disagreements with the federal legislative body, he repeated the following declaration so many times and on such a broad variety of issues that it has become a personal mantra for him, “If Congress won’t act, I will” (“Obama: ‘If Congress Won’t Act, I Will’”). He frequently asserted and then usurped legislative authority in a way that no other president in American history besides Andrew Jackson has ever dared. For example, though deemed unconstitutional at first, even President Roosevelt relied on the Congress to pass his legislative agenda. In perfect concert with what he learned from Alinsky, Obama

singlehandedly proclaimed that his ends were the ends of people, even though the people's duly elected Congress does not support them, and he further bequeathed upon himself the ethical supremacy to pursue his ends by any means necessary, in this case legislating through executive order. He is the first American president to have adopted the teachings of Alinsky, but he will certainly not be the last.

The former Secretary of State and 2016 Democrat presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, "met Saul Alinsky in high school, she brought him to Wellesley College [her alma mater], and she wrote her thesis on him [square brackets in the original]" ("D'Souza Declares There's A Strong Connection..."). In the acknowledgements of her thesis, she even mentions that Alinsky had offered her a job. The personal relationship between the two, combined with the extensive research on the part of Clinton, shows that Alinsky played a large part in the early political development of the future First Lady. She described her mentor as "a neo-Hobbesian who objects to the consensual mystique surrounding political processes; for him, conflict is the route to power...Mobilized groups representing opposed interests will naturally be in conflict which Alinsky considers a healthful and necessary aspect of a community organizing activity" (Rodham 8). The Alinskyan tactic of framing groups as diametrically opposed as a means of rousing conflict and effecting political change has coincided with its philosophical step-brother, postmodernism, also known as cultural Marxism, and has given birth to identity politics, an approach which Sec. Clinton has applied with considerable success throughout her career. It is also worthy of particular note that Clinton singled out Thomas Hobbes as a philosophical forefather of Alinsky. This goes to show, yet again, the progressive departure from the traditional American philosophical roots which lead back not to Hobbes but to Locke. This philosophical split which strikes at the very origins of American Individualism is wholly understood by modern progressive activists. The professional Progressive comprehends that the basic sociopolitical precepts of American Individualism are still very much intertwined, both consciously and subconsciously, within the prevailing culture and moral leanings in the United States, even amongst much of the progressive base. As Clinton put it, Alinsky was "the articulate proponent of what many consider to be a dangerous socio/political philosophy" (Rodham 1). With this in mind, Progressives have successfully used Alinsky as a guide in popularizing policies and cultural values that

they know are not just different from traditional American principles, but are antithetical and, as Clinton conceded, “dangerous” to them.

To realize their dream of a more vast and beneficent central government, the Progressives understood that they had to move beyond the traditional values which most Americans held, so they set out on a campaign to discredit and brush aside the Founders and the ideas which they proposed. Early Progressives knew that the reeducation of Americans would not happen overnight, but would take a gradual, *progressive* process to separate the American people from the cherished ideals of their heralded Founders. To do this they would have to take control of the American education system to teach a different ideology and an alternative history beginning at young age, before the tenets of individual rights were able to take hold. Bill Ayers, a friend of Barack Obama and a Progressive who protested the Vietnam War by participating in several violent acts of domestic terrorism, recently retired from his position as a Professor of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Ayers has long been an outspoken advocate of “nudging” society through the implementation of “progressive education” at the elementary school level. Furthermore, he clearly understands and accepts the fact that, on a different level, he must disguise to some extent his means and his ends due to the fact that they are blatantly anti-democratic and go against the wishes of a many of American parents. In response to a letter from a supporter who asked how to best reposition “progressive education not as radical, but as familiar and good,” Ayers responded:

The concept of progressive education from the concept of politics and political change. You can't separate them...the relationship between school and society...*The contradiction between trying to change school and being embedded in society that has the exact opposite values culturally and politically and socially from the values you're trying to build in a classroom.* This contradiction is something progressive educators should address, not dodge. [Emphasis added] (McCarthy)

For many years, Ayers and his auto-denominated radical colleagues have made some headway toward discrediting the Founding Fathers and the principles of American Individualism, but, to the dismay of the Progressives, exemplified in the multilevel

Republican electoral victories from 2010-2016, many Americans continue to want to conserve in some way the values upon which the country was founded. Thus, recently, under the direction of Ayers' friend, former President Obama, the federal Department of Education implemented a wide-reaching set of new teaching standards called Common Core. States were able to adopt the standards and accompanying high stakes tests voluntarily, but if they chose to opt out of the program, millions of dollars of federal education money were withheld. Many states that already cope with tight education budgets were, therefore, coerced by the federal government into accepting the Common Core testing standards whether they would really like to or not. With federal dollars now riding on the results of these tests, elementary and high school curriculums necessarily had to adjust to prepare students for the exams. In the words of Hofstra University Professor Alan Singer, "The cardinal rule of public education in the 21st Century seems to be that which gets tested is important and that which does not is dropped." According to Singer's article in the *Huffington Post* entitled "Common Core and the End of History," the administration of these progressive educational policies meant, in practical application, that on October 20, 2014 the New York State Board of Regents "voted unanimously that students did not have to pass both United States and Global History exams in order to graduate from high school," and the regents went on to claim that this meant that they were "actually raising academic standards." This means that children in the third most populated state in America will no longer be taught their own country's history. In effect, the century old Progressive mission to decouple the American people from the principles of the Founding Fathers has taken its next step, to avoid any recognition even of the Founders' existence. The effective eradication of history lessons on the Declaration of Independence and the Founding from the American curriculum leaves a cavernous void, and, since nature abhors a vacuum, it is yet to be seen if Progressivism will more thoroughly supplant American Individualism or if the country's founding philosophy will regain its place in the country's collective identity.

Well into the second decade of the 21st century, it has now become unambiguously clear that the United States has bifurcated politically, culturally, socially, and philosophically into two incompatible camps, American Individualism and Progressivism. These factions, which are more oil and water than yin and yang, are

composed of some of the most powerful officials in modern America, such as Speaker Paul Ryan and Justice Clarence Thomas, as well as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former President Barack Obama, all of whom are the direct philosophical progeny of the movements' long-passed figureheads, Ayn Rand and Saul Alinsky. Alinsky's legacy comes as a political manifesto, which, historically speaking, is a relatively common form of communicating and promoting one's ideas. Rand's philosophical defense of American Individualism, however, has been bequeathed in novel form, a medium which has rarely, if ever, been used so effectively as a means of conveying and popularizing one's beliefs. Prior to the examination of the literary techniques which have made Rand's novels so much more consequential than her non-fiction writings, one must explore the philosophical underpinnings of the ideas of Objectivism, which she hoped would help to preserve and protect American Individualism, and those of Progressivism, which she wished to disparage and disprove.

CHAPTER 4

Rand's Objectivism

Ayn Rand launched into the limelight in the mid-1940's with the triumph of her novel, *The Fountainhead*. The book was a fictional story of an architect hero with decidedly more than a touch of philosophical undertones. The ideas nuanced between the lines of *The Fountainhead* were fully drenched onto the pages of her follow-up novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, released in 1957. With the booming popularity of *Shrugged*, including its roughly sixty page essay on morality in the form of John Galt's speech, Rand became a household name and a philosophical icon. Having reached the heights of literary success, she spent the next two decades developing and advocating for her philosophy, which she titled Objectivism. She did this with the goal of building a comprehensive moral base for the American Individualist ideas of the Founders. Rand realized that 19th and 20th century theories like Marxism were backed up by innovative and extensive philosophical arguments. The American Founders, though they understood these matters at a common sense and historical level, never exhaustively tinkered with elaborate concepts of economics or the nature of reality. As the Executive Director of the Ayn Rand Institute, Dr. Yaron Brook, explained in a personal interview for this dissertation:

The American Founders were great political theorists and were great students of history, but they had an 18th Century understanding of the core philosophical ideas and they hadn't quite broken away from, I think, their kind of Christian philosophical foundations which are antagonistic to both individualism and capitalism, and really to the American Founding. And I think what Ayn Rand does is she takes that political philosophy of the Founders and establishes an epistemological and moral foundation for it, and then she actually improves it, that is she improves on their politics, as well. And in that sense, she is *the* American philosopher, I think. I don't think there is any other American

philosopher who is more American in their fundamental beliefs, in their ideas than she is.

Rand bolstered the fundamental principles of American Individualism by analyzing and distilling them through the filter of modern philosophical fields such as epistemology, metaphysics, and psychoanalysis. She disseminated Objectivism through various mediums, including televised interviews, self-published periodicals, speeches, and books. Her voluminous and complex writings span more than two decades and cover thousands of pages, thus this section will summarize the two key themes of her philosophy: Individualism vs. Collectivism and Objectivism vs. Subjectivism.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

From the outset, Ayn Rand planted her flag firmly on the side of individualism and railed against collectivism, no matter what shape it took. As a young girl, she mused about the wondrous prosperity of the United States, and she attributed America's plenteousness to the triumphs of great men who lived in a land where their natural freedoms were not infringed upon, a place where they could reach their highest potentials. At the same time, Rand also identified a pattern in collectivist philosophies, religions, and political systems that she felt demonstrated that collectivism in many forms tended to squash the initiative of individuals by holding as its focal point the altruistic value of self-sacrifice for the supposed benefit of a greater collective. Thus Rand set as one of the principle goals of her writings to confront collectivism and to extol the virtues of individualism and self-reliance.

The Making of an Individualist: Rand's Personal Experience with Collectivism

Rand's peaceful childhood was shattered in 1917 when the Bolshevik Revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin, swept Russia into a state of violence and chaos. Lenin's philosophy, known as Leninism, was principally influenced by the founding communist, Karl Marx. In an attempt to move toward egalitarianism, Lenin's Russia left very little room for personal choice or individual exceptionalism as in the case of

Rand's successful, hard working father. Lenin thought that the only way to manage the country's affairs after the revolution would be to rule with an iron fist. Individual freedoms were thrown aside because Lenin held close to the idea that the average person was not always able to figure out what was good for himself. Thus he instituted controls meant to help the people through coercive force, lest they play Judas to their own interests. Harvard University history professor and adviser to President Reagan on Soviet and Eastern European affairs, Richard Pipes, summarizes it well:

The basic thesis of Lenin's theory held that the worker, if left to himself, would not make revolution but come to terms with the capitalist... unless workers were led by a socialist party composed of professional revolutionaries, they would betray their class interest (as understood by socialists) and sell out. The proletariat, for its own good, had to be led by a minority of elect... a party that, both before and after the seizure of power, acted in the name of the workers but without their mandate. (*A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* 106)

Lenin felt that he knew better how to run others' lives than they did, and he was very effective in convincing millions of this notion. Rand looked on as well-meaning individuals joined in Lenin's efforts but later fell victim to mob violence as the full force of the revolution was felt across the country. She was only twelve when the Bolsheviks stole her family's life away from them. This immense injustice left her with an indelible scar, and she forever blamed the tragedy on the philosophy of collectivism.

Rand's first novel, *We the Living*, published in 1936, was a partially autobiographical depiction of three vibrant young people struggling to hold onto hope under the new communist regime during the first years of Soviet Russia. Rand meant for the setting to represent less a country and more a machine designed to break the will of each individual that has the bad luck of getting caught in its grinding cogs. The story follows three young Russians, Kira, Andrei and Leo, who fight to keep from letting the new system get the best of them. Kira, the female protagonist, is eerily similar to Rand, herself. She is a stubborn, passionate young woman with a strong sense of life and justice. She is raised in a wealthy family and educated by her mother who gives her a lot of leeway and refuses to constrain her personal growth. All of the preceding are traits

and biographical facts of Rand, as well. Rand described Kira as the only character in the novel that is “unbreakable” in the face of the communist, collectivist apparatus, possibly an expression of Rand’s feelings toward her own ego. The other two protagonists cannot withstand the strain pushed upon them by the system and are eventually broken, one in body, Andrei, and the other in spirit, Leo. The lives of each character get turned inside out and their souls are traumatized by the emotional weight of having to live in an unjust society not fit for the nature of men. The story’s character driven nature was in no way a matter of chance. In a letter to her publisher in early 1936, Rand explained the purpose of the novel:

The world at large is deluged to the saturation point with minute accounts of Soviet Russia, including all the latest statistics up to every single tractor produced by the ‘great experiment,’ very little has been said about actual life under communism, about living beings, not slogans and theories... With due apologies to good manners, I don’t give a damn about theories. I do give a good deal about human beings. (*Journals of Ayn Rand* 65)

In direct contradiction with typical description of Rand by her critics as a cold and uncaring woman, her writings focused on how collectives and their institutions affected human beings at a very meaningful and spiritual level. This novel was her first major battle and its protagonists her first soldiers in her lifelong war against collectivism.

We the Living instantly became a very controversial novel because of its unyielding anti-communist message. Through a tremendously aggressive and successful propaganda campaign, the Soviets were able to convince a large portion of the American intelligentsia that their grand social experiment was working and that their citizens were happier and freer than any other people in history. This was a major part of Lenin’s plan to achieve his objective of conquering not only Russia, but the world. His scheme focused on a gradual move westward, slowly and covertly infusing socialism and communism into the minds of individuals throughout Europe and the United States. Lenin was extremely secretive about his tactics, but he was not shy about his ambitions, “The American workers will not follow the bourgeoisie. They will be with us, for civil war against the bourgeoisie...We are banking on the inevitability of

world revolution... We are in a besieged fortress until other armies of the world socialist revolution come to our aid” (Kengor 17). His efforts led him to create the Communist International based in Moscow, an organization which sent orders to the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) regarding specific ways of swaying the American public toward a more socialist system. At the same time in which Rand was writing *We the Living*, the CPUSA was mounting a full-on attack campaign on the progressive president, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Their campaign focused on fooling the American public into believing that Roosevelt’s many social programs, unprecedented at that point in US history, did not go far enough and were actually a form of capitalist manipulation aimed at delving the American people further into poverty and pushing the entire world into another global conflict (Kengor 115). The climate of disinformation made Rand an easy target for the many Progressives in America who wanted to accept as true the wonderful narrative coming out of the Soviet Union. Her tales of terror, hunger, and heartbreak were not in line with the elite’s utopian vision of the state of affairs in Russia at the time, so she was attacked and called a liar. The American upper class and academia chose to believe in the stories of success and prosperity brought about by the new ideas of the Communists, ignoring the fact that Rand had lived through the revolution and had experienced first-hand the horrors of the soviet regime. In the face of this strong opposition, Rand was emboldened and knew that her fight had only just begun.

A couple of short years after writing *We the Living*, Rand took a three month hiatus from writing *The Fountainhead* to pen a dystopian novelette that put her vision of the long-term effects of collectivism on full display. *Anthem* tells the story of an exceptionally intelligent and inquisitive young person, known only by the name Equality 7-2521. It takes place in a society where the concept of the individual has been lost and only the great “we” remains. In an article in the June 1979 *Objectivist Calendar*, Rand explains how the idea first came to her, “I got the idea in my school days, in Soviet Russia, when I heard all the vicious attacks on individualism, and asked myself what the world would be like if men lost the word ‘I’” (*The Ayn Rand Column* 117). Throughout the novelette, Equality secretly slips away to a leftover tunnel from the “Unmentionable Times.” The now dark and solitary cavern used to be part of a complex subway system before the collectivists pushed the world into a backward state of perpetual devolution. Equality understands that it is strictly forbidden to know

anything that is not known by all and feels guilty at first about differentiating himself from his fellow men. Equality says, “We strive to be like all our brother men, for all men must be alike,” he then repeats the sacred chant to comfort himself, “We are one in all and all in one. There are no men but only the great WE, One, indivisible and forever” (*Anthem* 19). Little by little, Equality learns of the vast wealth of knowledge of the old world that had been long forgotten. Equality decides to risk his safety by setting himself apart from his peers and presenting the Councils of Scholars with the gift of electrically powered light, something that he discovered in his underground refuge. Although the new technology has the ability to revolutionize their society for the betterment of all its members, the Councils decide to destroy it and punish Equality for having creatively used his intelligence without the permission of all the society. The Councils are outraged, “What is not thought by all men cannot be true...What is not done collectively cannot be good...it would bring ruin to the Department of Candles. The Candle is a great boon to mankind, as approved by all men. Therefore it cannot be destroyed by the whim of one” (73). The Councils decide to mercilessly torture Equality for his indiscretions. In keeping with Rand’s belief in the Romantic school of writing, he manages to hold onto hope, convinced that he will be able to create his own paradise of liberty beyond the collective inferno. He braves the beatings and eventually manages to escape, vowing that he will construct a new world outside the bounds of his current society, just as Rand was able to do after having fled the Soviet Union. Equality describes how he envisions the future, a description that is redolent of Emma Lazarus’ poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty, “And it will become as the heart of the earth, lost and hidden at first, but beating, beating louder each day. And word of it will reach every corner of the earth. And the roads of the world will become as veins which will carry the best of the world’s blood to my threshold” (104). *Anthem* was Rand’s second hymn to the power of the human spirit and her second scrutinizing dissection of the effects of collectivism on an individual’s will and on society as a whole. Her first two major works of fiction focused on the negative consequences of the governmentalization of collectivism, a theme that would reemerge in her writings for decades.

Her final work of fiction and by far her most well-known novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, published in 1957, exhibited Rand’s belief that small seeds of collectivism could grow

into uncontrollable weeds, leaching from the hopes and ambitions of individuals until they finally surrender. In *Shrugged*, the industrious members of society, all of whom Rand portrays as staunch individualists, come under a constant siege of taxation and overregulation by collectivists and cronies looking to take that which they had not earned from those who work so hard to generate efficient production, both materially and intellectually. These takers, as Rand terms them in the novel, or second-handers, as Howard Roark calls them in *The Fountainhead*, become an ever growing burden upon those who already create and manufacture all that makes a comfortable life in the First World possible. The collectivist onslaught, combined with their unceasing and intellectually dishonest slanders against “the makers,” eventually brings them to a breaking point. The producers, led by their mysterious philosophical guide, John Galt, decide that they are tired of working as slaves for people who only live to condemn them. They shrug off their supposed duty to society and disappear, creating an isolated paradise for themselves in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. In Rand’s Romantic fictional world, the great individualist producers have the means to escape their tortured existences and live happily ever after, but because of her experiences in the real world during the Bolshevik Revolution, Rand learned quickly that such grandiose schemes were not nearly as feasible. *Atlas Shrugged* paints a hopeful picture in which the heroes could thrive and the villains have to live with the negative consequences of their actions, but in reality she knew that this was not always the case. She felt that one must always be on the lookout for signs of the spread of collectivism.

Due to her life changing experiences with communism, Rand was keenly aware of the true meaning of oppression and she easily recognized when individual liberties were infringed upon, whether by collective tyranny or singular dictators. According to her, communism was just another masked version of slavery, a practice that has stretched to every part of the globe at some point in human history. Every race, color, creed, ethnicity, sex, and religion has occupied the position of slave and the position of slave owner at one time or another. The human story has nearly always been stained by the blood of slaves, and some of the greatest accomplishments in history were realized through the cruel exploitation of a great many people. Two clear examples are the Pyramids of Giza and the Great Wall of China, which were built on the backs of hundreds of thousands of enslaved individuals. Human beings have enslaved one

another since before recorded history, but only recently has the question of the morality of the practice been raised. Over the last few centuries, the heated debate over the ethicality of continuing the tradition forced its proponents to formulate various moral justifications for slavery, the most prevalent of which based its merit on the idea of the existence of an inferior race, something not quite fully human. This was the basis of the most archaic form of collectivism, that of prejudicing an individual based on his or her race – discrimination grounded in faulty biology.

Racial Collectivism

The American colonies, themselves, already had a long and storied tradition of slavery even before they officially became a sovereign country in the late 18th century. Within decades of the establishment of the first settlements, many European immigrants were enslaved or forced into indentured servitude, but slave owners quickly found that it was quite difficult to keep track of their slaves in the new world. Many slaves and indentured servants escaped and easily blended into the rest of the population, moving American farmers to make the switch to more easily identifiable black slaves. The rationalization of enslaving blacks based on the idea of their being something less than human soon surfaced and was common throughout the slave-owning cultures that participated in the transatlantic trade. It was not until 1859, though, when Charles Darwin published his Theory of Evolution in *On the Origin of Species* that proponents of race-based slavery were given the scientific excuse for which they had longed.

Though slavery in the United States was abolished in 1865 following the Civil War, the history of the country's institutionalized racism was far from over. The new Theory of Evolution gave racists a fresh way to rationalize their repulsive and ignorant philosophy. They began to manipulate Darwin's theory to fit their prejudices, saying that the theory proved that blacks were subhuman and had not yet evolved to the level of whites. This new mindset was called Scientific Racism. Since black Americans were now all free, they slowly began to migrate, soon living shoulder-to-shoulder with much of the rest of the population. Unapologetic racists and former slave owners had to mingle with newly freed slaves and they were not happy about it. In the 1870's, many

states began to enact laws to segregate their communities, creating separate facilities for whites and blacks. These laws, which would come to be known as the Jim Crow laws, would divide America for another 90 years, and their residual effects still cause rifts in the country today.

It was in the midst of this climate of racial segregation that Ayn Rand arrived in the United States. Before long, she became an unshakeable champion for civil rights and individual liberty regardless of a person's skin color. Many areas of the States were strictly split along color lines during the first sixty years of the 20th century, and tensions over race relations often reached violent boiling points in the South. Race riots and horrid acts of cruelty by the Ku Klux Klan tore apart towns all across the country. During this heated and brutal fight, Rand stood firm and had this to say about racism, "Racism is the lowest, most crudely primitive form of collectivism. It is the notion of ascribing moral, social or political significance to a man's genetic lineage... It is a barnyard or stock-farm version of collectivism, appropriate to a mentality that differentiates between various breeds of animals, but not between animals and men" (*Virtue of Selfishness* 147). As a poor, female immigrant in the first half of the 20th century, it took tremendous courage for Rand to publicly mount an assault on racism and its institutional manifestations, but she consistently made her stance known. She refused to back down from her position because she saw racism like she did every other type of collectivism: It was mentality indicative of a person that was a moral and intellectual degenerate devoid of reasonable thought and ethical action. Rand did not discriminate when letting her disgust about racism be known. She stood on the side of the individual and felt racial prejudice should not be tolerated by anyone anywhere. Here she details her view of the state of race relations in 1960's America:

Today, racism is regarded as a crime if practiced by a majority – but as an inalienable right if practiced by a minority...Nobody can pretend anymore that the goal of such policies is the elimination of racism – particularly when one observes that the real victims are the better members of these privileged minorities...The minority's members are expected by their egalitarian leaders to remain a passive herd crying for help...Those who ignore the threats and struggle to rise through

individual effort and achievement are denounced as traitors. Traitors – to what? To a physiological (racial) collective. (*The New Left* 167)

Still quietly a sad undercurrent in many societies, racism is not the only collectivist remnant leftover from the 20th century which continues to affect the world at the outset of the 21st.

Religious, Ethnic, and Gender Collectivism

Collective prejudice based primarily on religious affiliation, ethnicity, and country of origin has continued to shape the world to such a degree that it has come to define the first decade and a half of the 21st century. The philosophy driving Muslim extremist jihadists, who struck their hardest blow on September 11th, 2001, is another strain of the collectivist disease that, per Ayn Rand's observations, has plagued human relations for centuries. 21st century Islamic radicals have harkened back to the same collectivist philosophy to which the National Socialists in Germany ascribed – anyone who does not believe exactly as we do is not worthy of life and must be stricken from the earth. In accordance with this philosophy, the Nazis set apart the Jews, homosexuals, and other groups for systematic extermination. They, just like the racists and communists before them, went to great lengths to rationalize the slaughter that they committed. They performed troubling biological tests on their captives in an effort to concoct a scientific justification that might alleviate whatever moral reservations they may still have had. Due in part to an extensive campaign of propaganda, the Nazis were able to brainwash a large portion of the German population into a delusional state of animosity toward the Jews, many times using distorted evidence fabricated during their biological experiments. Combined with the emerging theories of eugenics – that a population can better itself through selective genetic improvement – the Nazis had all they needed to make the case for the collective annihilation of the Jewish people. “The Jew became ‘life unworthy of life’ not because the ordinary German bureaucrat fantasized about past Aryan glories or Jewish materialism or the Aryan nation; rather, in the post-Wannsee period, the Jew, in both professional and popular literature, took on the status of an imminent and major blood threat” (Glass 118). It was not just a select

few that joined forces and locked arms in opposition to the Jewish people, they were “not acting in an ideological vacuum. Many of their officers held advanced degrees, and the soldiers of these squads came from a cross-section of German society” (Glass 111). Just as average Joes turned into racists sanctioning collective suffering in the 19th century, and everyday communists and Nazis carried out atrocities in the name of the common good in the 20th, now Islamic terrorists have been handed the baton for the 21st.

Since the 1990’s, Muslim terrorists that claim that they are “holy warriors” have leveled US Embassies in Africa, twice attacked the World Trade Center in New York City, bombed the London transit system and the Atocha train station in Madrid, killed more than a hundred in Paris and dozens more in Nice, and ruthlessly murdered hundreds of thousands of others in their global war against anyone and everyone who does not conform with their ideals. Islamic extremism is not limited to acts of violence against individuals from other cultures and religions around the globe. Within the Arab world, from which much Islamic extremism springs, women are too often collectively mistreated based on their genders. Stonings are a regular occurrence for women who are raped, while the rapists get away with a mere slap on the wrist. Women are treated as second class citizens, with separate train cars and with few, if any, property rights and civil liberties. Homosexuals are also collectively prejudiced based on their sexual orientation, and they are often put to death in many Arab countries if it is even suspected that they may be gay. Just as they were treated under the reign of the Nazi regime and are now abused in much of Arab society, homosexuals are still being discriminated against in many parts of the world based solely on their sexual orientation.

It is considered unthinkable ignorance in most of Western society today to say that a person should be thrown in jail for marrying someone of a different race, but it was not long ago when one could legally be punished for this simple, private and victimless act. Anti-miscegenation laws (laws against interracial marriage) still existed in some states in America until they were deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1967. Just a half century later, it is unconscionable to think that the government would carry out through the use of force the prohibition of marriage between two individuals of different races. At this same moment in history, though, many people in

the United States and other countries around the world still find it appropriate for the government to meddle in the personal lives of homosexuals. Though she, herself, did not view homosexuality as a necessarily moral practice, Ayn Rand was decades ahead of her time by opposing any government role in limiting the rights of homosexuals. She found it repugnant that the state should intervene in one's relationship with the threat of physical force through imprisonment, "It involves psychological flaws, corruptions, errors, or unfortunate premises, but there is a psychological immorality at the root of homosexuality. Therefore I regard it as immoral... It's proper among consenting adults...legally...[but] more than that, if you want my really sincere opinion, it's disgusting" (Walker, Jeff). Rand defended homosexuals' freedom from government invasion of their privacy based on her belief in the sovereignty of the individual whether she agreed with their actions or not.

In 2008, the California Supreme Court ruled that gay marriage would thenceforth be legal, but the ruling was met with swift opposition. Gays all over the state finally received their long awaited marriage licenses, a declaration that their society, at last, recognized the validity of their relationship. At the same time, opponents of the new law, who based their arguments largely on their personal religious beliefs and generalities about the protection of America's children, worked overtime on a campaign to pass a provision in the state constitution to ban gay marriage. The challengers of gay marriage were successful in their bid to outlaw it once again when, in November of 2008, Proposition 8 passed by a 52%-48% margin of a democratic vote of the people of California (Audi). Then in early 2009, the California Supreme Court, who had ruled that gay marriage was legal just months earlier, changed its ruling and deemed that the new ban would stand in accordance with the will of a majority the people. In a prescient statement from a 1959 interview, Rand stood up for American Individualism and explained why she felt this reasoning was flawed:

I reject the idea that people have the right to vote on everything. The traditional American system was a system based on the idea that the majority will prevail only in public or political affairs, and that it was limited by inalienable individual rights. Therefore, I do not believe that a majority can vote a man's life or property or freedom away from him.

Therefore, I do not believe that if a majority votes on any issue that this makes the issue right. It doesn't. (Wallace)

The Contemporary Struggle: Individual Rights vs. the “Greater Good”

Rand sought to demonstrate that collectivism stems from when people repeatedly make the mistake of treating abstract concepts as concrete ones, abusing individuals (concrete) based on biased misconceptions regarding a group of people (abstraction of the concept of a collection of many individuals) with whom a given individual may share a similar skin color, religion, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Though she clearly stated that, “there is no entity as ‘the tribe’ or ‘the public’; the tribe (or the public or society) is only a number of individual men” (*Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* 20), she knew that it is sometimes necessary to speak in abstractions so that a conversation does not become cumbersome. She also believed, however, that one must always take great care not to assign qualities to individuals just because they may be descriptive of a group of which that person may be a member. For example, there objectively verifiable statistics that there are many serious problems facing the citizens of the urban centers of the United States related to criminal activity, low graduation rates, and drug abuse. These figures are vitally important in determining exactly what problems communities face and how best to resolve them, but one must be careful not to fall into the fallacious logic of attributing the negative qualities of a whole community to its individual members, many of whom fight day in and day out to fix the issues that threaten their neighborhoods. The individual members of a community must be judged on their own personal merits and actions.

Throughout history, many have too often stereotyped members of other cultures, races, or religions, broad brushing them into a collective blur because it is easier to quickly and blindly judge someone in this way than to get to know each individual personally and draw conclusions based on his or her own virtues and shortcomings. This laziness, or economization if you may, has caused individuals to continually be subjugated to the demands of society, to the mythical and always indefinable *we*; *us* vs. *them*. This *we* has taken many forms in just the last quarter century, showing that it will

be necessary to identify the destructive force of collectivism and resist its onslaught in the 21st century. From 1990 to 2015, collectivism has ended hundreds of thousands of lives and harmed millions more through radical Islamic terrorism, genocides in Rwanda and Darfur, and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Bhutan. According to Rand, these are all variations of the same philosophy, a philosophy she depicts as a union mob in *The Fountainhead* and as committees of takers in *Atlas Shrugged*. She understood through her own life experience that the proponents of collectivism often try to disguise it in its many forms by speaking in ambiguous and abstract terms. She stressed the importance of valuing justice and the rights of the individual before ceding any liberties to government for the good of society. She thought that the Founders of the United States understood this concept and created the first country based on moral values. Rand was concerned that the US had strayed from its honorable founding ideals, but she praised its effort to establish a system based not on the oppression of its citizens for the “good” of all, but on the protection of each individual’s rights – a principle that will surely be a point of contention in the 21st century:

Since there is no such entity as ‘society,’ since society is only a number of individual men, this meant, in practice, that the rulers of society were exempt from moral law...The most profoundly revolutionary achievement of the United States of America was *the subordination of society to moral law*. The principle of man’s individual rights represented the extension of morality into the social system – as a limitation on the power of the state, as man’s protection against the brute force of the collective. (*Virtue of Selfishness* 109)

Throughout the years, Ayn Rand constructed a philosophy that expounded moral principles regarding topics that ranged from the most intimate aspects of personal relationships to the impactful decisions that guide international politics. Every facet of her belief system was rooted firmly in the value which she thought was the most vital of all: life. Rand believed that each individual is born with the right to one’s own life and the right to live one’s life in the manner in which he or she sees fit, without being forced to sacrifice one’s life solely for the benefit of others. “A ‘right’ is a moral principle defining and sanctioning a man’s freedom of action in a social context. There is only

one fundamental right (all the others are its consequences or corollaries: a man's right to his own life)" (*Virtue of Selfishness* 110). The statement that each individual has the inherent right to his or her own life is almost universally accepted and cherished as truth. Beyond this truth, though, the corollaries that spring from it are not as easily understood nor as broadly embraced as that of the right to one's life. Rand states that all other rights are born from the right to life, thus one must clearly define and thoroughly understand what life *is* to be able to identify other rights which extend from it. Life is equivalent to the time that one spends on this earth. Thus every individual has a right to decide what is to be done with his or her time. A large portion of almost everyone's time, and therefore almost everyone's life, is spent at work in the pursuit of goods and services that sustain and better one's quality of life and the lives of one's family members. So each individual has a right to that which is gained in this effort: one's property. At this point, just the second extension of one's right to life, most modern societies begin to part from this logic and morality, taking in what Rand contended was an infringement upon basic human rights in practice and many times even in principle.

Just three and a half years after Rand arrived in the United States, the Great Depression hit and swept the nation into a state of poverty that it had not experienced since the Civil War many decades before. A few years into the depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in a landslide and quickly began instituting extensive social programs. He was the most ardent supporter of central planning who had ever stepped foot in the Oval Office, and was successful in his ploy to grow the size and scope of government to an unprecedented level. Much of today's more than \$19,000,000,000 American debt can be directly attributed to the long-term lack of sustainability of many of the programs that Roosevelt put into place. Late in life, Roosevelt proposed a set of social guarantees that would have broadened the scope of the American government's powers even more if they had been implemented. He called this plan "The Second Bill of Rights." These "rights" included, but were not limited to, the right to a job at a decent wage, a good home, adequate medical care, protection from economic fears, the freedom from "unfair" competition, and even went as far as to say that, regardless of one's job or skills, everyone should be assured the right to earn enough to pay for recreational time. When the Democratic Party revived this platform for the 1960 election cycle, Rand's response was clear and to the point:

Jobs, food, clothing, recreation (!), homes, medical care, education, etc., do not grow in nature. These are man-made values – goods and services produced by men. *Who* is to provide them? If some men are entitled *by right* to the products of the work of others, it means that those others are deprived of rights and condemned to slave labor. Any alleged ‘right’ of one man, which necessitates the violation of the rights of another, is not and cannot be a right. No man can have a right to impose an unchosen obligation, an unrewarded duty or an involuntary servitude on another man. There can be no such thing as ‘*the right to enslave.*’ (*Virtue of Selfishness* 113)

Roosevelt was not the only major political leader of the mid-twentieth century to strongly advocate for and institutionalize “collective rights.” Rand was also not the only intellectual leader at the time who staunchly opposed the idea of collective rights. She, amongst others, preached the moral and intellectual supremacy of individual rights. In a 1954 speech, Albert Einstein described his beliefs regarding the subject, “In talking about human rights today, we are referring primarily to the following demands: protection of the individual against arbitrary infringement by other individuals or by the government; the right to work and to adequate earnings from work; freedom of discussion and teaching; adequate participation of the individual in the formation of government” (Einstein 35). Einstein, like Rand and the American Founders before her, delineates rights as being strictly individual, not entailing the infringement of others’ individual rights, and not having qualities ascribable to any given race, religion, or society.

It was Rand’s belief that the conflict surrounding the recognition of rights as individual or collective was due in part to the fact that even the idea of rights is relatively new to philosophy. Aristotle, Cicero and Jesus of Nazareth all spoke of individual rights millennia ago, but those rights were not widely understood nor put into practice until late in the 18th century when the Founders of the United States confidently proclaimed them in the Declaration of Independence and then proceeded to protect them in the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Rand explained the historical significance of this bold leap:

The concept of individual rights is so new in human history that most men have not grasped it fully to this day. In accordance with the two theories of ethics, the mystical or the social, some men assert that rights are a gift of God – others, that rights are a gift of society. But, in fact, the source of rights is in man's nature. The Declaration of Independence stated that men 'are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.' Whether one believes that man is the product of a Creator or of nature, the issue of man's origin does not alter the fact that he is an entity of a specific kind – a rational being – that he cannot function successfully under coercion, and that rights are a necessary condition of his particular mode of survival. (*Virtue of Selfishness* 111)

Traditionally, Americans have been taught to be wary of government, believing that it is the nature of government to corrupt its individual representatives and to usurp power whenever possible. From its inception, America Individualists saw government as a malevolent force that needed to be constrained so that it would not grow and infringe upon the rights of the sovereign people. The Founders felt that government was a necessary evil and a precariously hazardous tool for the protection of individual rights. George Washington voiced his feelings on the matter, "Government is not reason, it is not eloquence – it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master" (*Basic American Documents* 326). James Madison, nicknamed "The Father of the Constitution," concurred with Washington and wrote this with regard to government's nature as a reflection of the human beings who hold high offices:

Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. (Hamilton)

Just as Rand and the Founders predicted, the Progressives in American and countless other governments around the globe regularly seize opportunities to centralize power and socialize rights that were originally designated for the individual. It was the opinion of Rand and the Founders that the power of government needed to be closely monitored and controlled because government is, if nothing else, the power of one group of men to use legalized force over other men. And since government has no real means of production and derives much of its power through its ability to tax individuals, if government is to give to one man, it must take from another, often through coercion. Due to this compulsive nature, Rand felt she had a different idea of how governments should be funded in a fully free society:

In a fully free society, taxation – or, to be exact, payment for government services – would be *voluntary*. Since the proper services of a government – the police, the armed forces, the law courts – are demonstrably needed by individual citizens and affect their interests directly, the citizens would (and should) be willing to pay for such services, as they pay for insurance. (*The Virtue of Selfishness* 116)

Because Rand’s idyllic world of voluntary government funding is merely a distant dream, she believed that the great might wielded by governments and the inherent flaws in the men that run them mean that governments should be restrained to limited and clearly defined roles, such as those expressed in the Constitution of the United States. Rand thought that when the government inevitably grows beyond those roles and augments its own authority, it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to have a true influence in their own affairs:

When the government was restricted to its proper function – that of policeman and umpire – an honestly applied common sense was sufficient for a voter to make an intelligent choice. But when the government controls every aspect of a complex industrial civilization, and the voter is asked to choose the men who will determine the fate of industry, science, art and every other human activity – what knowledge will be sufficient to make *that* choice? (“Who Will Protect Us from Our Protectors?” 17)

With a quick glance at the goings on of the governments in Washington DC and Brussels today, one realizes that *those* choices too often lead to the same patterns of nepotism, or “crony corporatism,” that were detailed in *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* more than fifty years ago. It is for this reason that sales of Rand’s books have spiked each time that there has been major government intervention into the markets: when the Federal Reserve reduced interest rates to artificially low levels, the subprime bailout including Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the TARP bailout, the stimulus package, etc. (“Ayn Rand: Atlas felt a sense of déjà vu”). All of these disruptions in the free market were excused as having again been implemented for the greater good. Rand witnessed the dire consequences of similarly misguided altruism firsthand when she was young, saying that if this principle of the greater good is generally accepted, “one ends up with such a gruesome absurdity as Soviet Russia, a country professedly dedicated to ‘the common good,’ where, with the exception of a miniscule clique of rulers, the entire population has existed in subhuman misery for over two generations” (*Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* 20). The government and the beneficiaries of these “rescue packages” claim that, though many individuals might be harmed by these actions, the collective result is positive. In reality, each of these instances is a real life example of the way that overly greedy businessmen can influence the centralized power of government to use its force on their behalf.

Rand always called for a philosophy based on “rational self-interest,” but she made a clear differentiation between logical selfishness and immoral greed. Through the protagonist, Howard Roark, in *The Fountainhead* she portrays her belief that every individual has the right to accumulate wealth through his or her own efforts, but no one has the right to take from others that which they have produced. In this way, businessmen from ENRON in 2001 to Wall Street in the lead up to the 2008 crisis overstepped their ethical boundaries, infringed upon the rights of others, and no longer had in mind their own rational self-interest. They were instead moved by immoral greed as they swindled folks out of their hard-earned savings.

According to Rand, it is per altruistic rationales that many Western societies continue to take from some citizens to give to others. As long as it is done because the society must collectively “take care” of its poor, then it becomes legally justifiable to

take from some individuals through the force of taxation to provide for others. The Founders did not institute such programs because they were extremely wary of the secondary and tertiary social consequences. As American Founder Benjamin Franklin put it:

For my own part, I am not so well satisfied of the goodness of this thing. I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion of the means. I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. In my youth I traveled much, and I observed in different countries, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer. (“On the Price of Corn...”)

Though this point of view was never implemented perfectly, it seemed to work quite well until the Industrial Revolution brought about social upheaval and necessitated a review of this way of thinking. American Individualists, led by Rand, still believe that private charity is the best means for helping fellow citizens, but what about those who fall through the cracks?

If *society* does not care for the poor, then *who* will? As the Progressive movement gained steam in the 1890’s, American Individualist President Grover Cleveland was confronted with this question and presented with legislation that would have enacted the first welfare programs in the United States. When Cleveland rejected the proposal, he responded by saying this:

I do not believe that the power and duty of the General Government ought to be extended to the relief of individual...A prevalent tendency to disregard the limited mission of this power and duty should, I think, be steadfastly resisted, to the end that the lesson should be constantly enforced that though the people support the Government the Government should not support the people. (“Why the President Said No” 255)

Government “safety nets” were widely dismissed in the 19th century, but as they became ever more prevalent in the mid-20th century, Rand wrote of a resolution to what she deemed as a major problem in a 1963 essay, entitled “Collectivized Ethics.” She stated that her proposition does not infringe upon anyone’s rights and it does not negatively affect anyone’s pocketbook or motivation:

Once, when Barbara Branden was asked by a student: ‘What will happen to the poor in an Objectivist society?’ – she answered: ‘If *you* want to help them, you will not be stopped.’ *This* is the essence of the whole issue...Only individual men have the right to decide when or whether they wish to help others; society – as an organized political system – has no rights in the matter at all.

In a hypothetical society that follows an Objectivist form of ethics, the onus would be on the individual to take care of himself and the people around him. The responsibility is not shed and handed over to a bureaucrat to be resolved the same way that a tax form or an application for loan are filled out. Good deeds are to be carried out by one’s own *volition*, by one’s own goodness. In this way, both sides receive the emotional payment for the close, personal, humanizing interaction. Many collectivists still believe that the “people helping people” method is too idealistic and would not work if enacted as an actual policy measure, thus the continued progressive push for ever expanding social programs. For the American Individualist response to this, one only needs to refer back again to the words of President Cleveland:

The friendliness and charity of our countrymen can always be relied upon to relieve their fellow-citizens in misfortune. This has been repeatedly and quite lately demonstrated. Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the Government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character, while it prevents the indulgence among our people of that kindly sentiment and conduct which strengthens the bonds of a common brotherhood. (“When the President Said No” 255).

The informal “bonds of a common brotherhood” caused by individual charity were indicative of American society during the 19th century, but they turned into a codified set of publicly funded social safety nets as the progressive argument won the day throughout the 20th century. As collectivist Progressives proceeded with their agenda during this time, Rand sought to reestablish American Individualism and railed against any collectivist idea since she related all of them back to her life defining encounter with the Bolsheviks in her youth. Furthermore, she resisted any and all philosophical rationales used by the founder of modern collectivism, Karl Marx. Rand regarded the most harmful Marxist justification to be the concept that was developed and defended by Kant, Nietzsche, and Hegel, that of subjectivism.

Objectivism vs. Subjectivism

Existence exists. This seems to be a statement upon which everyone can agree. So much so that it is almost juvenile in its simplicity, but Rand was keenly aware of the fact that it was crucial to understand and repeat this truth. She saw that philosophical thought had been badly distorted for the previous two centuries by men who had checked common sense at the door in exchange for abstruse, improvable theories that resulted in more contradictions and questions than affirmations and answers. She viewed her ultimate political evil, communism, as a mere symptom of its philosophical predecessors that preached the unreality of reality. Rand traced the philosophical roots of modern collectivism step-by-step from the father of the movement, Karl Marx, who was an apprentice in the school of thought of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who was the ideological offspring of Rand’s greatest philosophical foe, Immanuel Kant. Kant is one of the most widely taught modern philosopher in the Western world. His ideas have oozed into the way that Europeans go about their daily lives, how they structure their governments, their mentality toward individual rights, and their waning belief that individuals can directly shape the world around them. His philosophy is now prevalent in the United States, as well, leading many to question the very existence of reality. Rand felt that the consequences of this mentality are many, ranging from the stripping of one’s ambition to the claim that there is no such thing as an objective fact. She found this tendency toward the assumption that the world around mankind is just a

manifestation of one's mind to be a troubling one. She thought it to be such a profoundly pivotal point in modern philosophical thought, that she dedicated much of John Galt's speech to the issue at the climax of *Atlas Shrugged*:

We, the men of the mind, are now on strike against you in the name of a single axiom, which is the root of our moral code, just as the root of yours is the wish to escape it: the axiom that *existence exists*. Existence exists – and the act of grasping that statement implies two corollary axioms: that something exists which one perceives and that one exists possessing consciousness, consciousness being the faculty of perceiving that which exists. (*Atlas Shrugged* 929)

Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and the History of Subjectivism

To understand why this concept has become such a contentious topic of debate in 20th and 21st century philosophy, one must first comprehend its origins. In the late 18th century, the Enlightenment brought back classical thought and renewed ideas of individual strength and freedom in pre-revolutionary United States and France. At the same time, a German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, penned a diverse ideology that would later give birth to the political and philosophical arch enemy of its Western counterparts. Kant posited that all men were born with an innate, interconnected store of knowledge which he called '*a priori*,' which he deemed was an understanding that is "independent of experience and even of all impressions of the senses"...The truths known by pure reason are *a priori*. They include logical laws, and certain other truths about the world...They also include the moral law" (Walker, Ralph 6). According to Kant, this stockpile of instinctive knowledge was the one and only *true* reason, and he scoffed at any empirical evidence to the contrary:

In this philosophical and critical age it is difficult to take this empiricism seriously, and it is presumably put forward only as an exercise for judgment and in order to set in a clearer light, through the contrast, the necessity that belongs to rational *a priori* principles. One can therefore

be grateful to those who want to trouble themselves with this otherwise unproductive task. (*Critique of Practical Reason* 14)

He did not worry himself with the idea of a burden of proof because, in his opinion, there were no facts, no objectivity, only the justification for self-evidence in the mind of whoever believed whatever he or she *wanted* to believe. By this logic, Kant accepted the existence of God based solely on the fact that a majority of men throughout history had believed in a god, “No one is good (the archetype of the good) except only God (whom we do not see). But from where do we have the concept of God as the highest good? Simply from the *idea* of moral perfection which reason draws up *a priori*” (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 48-49). He felt that moral law was a gift from God, inherent in all human beings. He thought that it needed no other justification apart from its incontrovertible obviousness, “The objective reality of the moral law can be proved by no deduction, by no effort of reason whether theoretical, speculative, or empirically supported. So if we wanted to renounce its apodeictic certainty it could not be confirmed by any experience” (*Critique of Practical Reason* 47). Kant proposed an entire theory of reality and morality without supporting his claims with evidence, even boldly asserting that any proof that was not in harmonious concurrence with his philosophy must have been wrong. Kant further defended his paradoxical notions by contending that, in the absence of objectivity and empirical fact, the ‘sensible world’ as he called it – the one to which a human being’s senses react – is not to be understood, but is an obstacle to be overcome:

A rational being must regard itself as *intelligence* (and thus not from the side of its lower powers [its senses]) not as belonging to the sensible world, but rather to the intelligible world...As a rational being, and so as belonging to the intelligible world, man can never think of the causality of his own will except under the idea of freedom. For independence from the sensible world’s determining causes (which is what reason must always attribute to itself) is freedom. (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 48)

Rand thought that such ideas were extremely dangerous and that escaping from reality, the sensible world, was not freedom, but cowardice.

As in every other aspect of human endeavor, when the pendulum swings to such an extreme as the completely subjective reality of Kant, it is bound to quickly swing to the polar opposite. The Empiricists became the yin to Kant's yang. Instead of preaching a detachment from the real world, they sought a negation of one's mind. The Empiricists taught that, though one could receive data from the outside world through his or her senses, one was not able to interpret that data with complete certainty. For example, if a person sees an apple, according to the Empiricists, one could never be sure it was anything more than just a red blotch of light entering one's corneas and registering with one's brain. The person could not definitively say it was an apple even when he or she picked it up and ate it, at which point the only certainty would be the taste sensations while the concept of the apple would still be left unknowable. The act of conceptualization was absent from the Empiricist method, and logical deduction from Kant's. Rand summarized the two schools in her own words:

Those who claimed that man obtains his knowledge of the world by deducing it exclusively from concepts, which come from inside his head and are not derived from the perception of physical facts (the Rationalists) – and those who claimed that man obtains his knowledge from experience, which was held to mean: by direct perception of immediate facts, with no recourse to concepts (the Empiricists). To put it more simply: those who joined the Witch Doctor, by abandoning reality – and those who clung to reality, by abandoning their mind. (“Kant Versus Sullivan” 112)

Though the Empiricists represented a competing school of thought to that of Kant's Rationalism, it was Kant's message of self-evident fact regardless of empirical and logical contradictions that would later become the philosophical base for modern collectivism.

Karl Marx, the father of modern collectivism, gave credit to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel for inspiring much of his philosophical thought. Hegel was a byproduct of Kant's theory that all conceptions of reality were subjective, but Hegel tried to remedy the contradictions in Kant's conjectures by taking the disastrous step of eliminating the idea of the existence of reality, altogether. Australian philosopher, Peter

Singer, describes this change, “Kant still thought that there was an ultimate reality that was not mental: he called it the thing-in-itself. But for Hegel this was nonsense. For Hegel if there’s no way of knowing the thing-in-itself, then we can’t really have knowledge” (Magee 201). Singer goes on to explain how Hegel tried to alleviate the discrepancies between the conceptual and the phenomenal (that which is experienced through one’s senses):

The only solution, Hegel says, is to reject this idea of a knower and what’s known, the table for instance, as existing on its own, separate from the mind that knows it. What you have to say is that knowledge, if it’s to exist, must be immediate. There must be no medium [one’s senses] through which we know things. How can that happen? Only if the knower and the known are one and the same. How can *that* happen? Since the knower is mind, what is known must also be mind, so all of reality must be mental. (Magee 201-202)

Hegel had now brought philosophy to a complete denial that existence exists. He postulated that no one actually perceives anything because there is nothing to perceive. He stated that everyone and everything must be a projection of one’s own consciousness and not divided from it. He went on to theorize that the world changed due to a back-and-forth process between thesis and antithesis (the contradictions inherent in his and Kant’s philosophies), and that the world would eventually arrive to its synthesis (resolution of these contradictions) in the form of a harmonious utopia. This is where Karl Marx stepped in and seized on the ideas of Hegel. Bryan Magee, a world renowned author on philosophy, explained that Marx’s philosophy was a mirror image of Hegel’s, “The great point of difference is that whereas Hegel saw this process [that of the evolving world toward a utopian synthesis] as happening to something mental or spiritual, Marx saw it as happening to something material. With that one difference, however, the whole pattern of ideas remains the same” (Magee 205). Though Hegel saw this transformation as a spiritual one to take place within one’s own ideals, Marx took it as the impetus toward social change in the physical world. This shift, combined with the profoundly revolutionary idea that what had been considered reality is now to be seen as a mere projection of one’s consciousness, had immense consequences. This means that

every other person in the world is nothing but a projection of another's imagination. The alarming result of this way of thinking, if actually put into practice – which one would assume is the purpose of having a philosophy in the first place –, is that any individuals apart from oneself would have no rights and could be arbitrarily done away with since they do not really exist, anyway. This sense of unreality played a major part in the Communists' rationalization of their slaughter of millions of people. Rand understood the blatant contradictions still present in Hegel and Marx's philosophies, and her experience with the Bolsheviks showed her just how devastating the results of such a philosophy could be. In her typically blunt fashion, she contended that the only reason that the philosophy continued to take hold was intellectual laziness. Because they claimed that there was either no existence or the interpretation of reality was entirely subjective, they had no need to justify their claims or respect the claims of others. The truth was either self-evidently known only to them or there was no truth at all, leaving them free to act as they please. However, because of the purposefully vague and illogical nature of Kant and Hegel's writings, they are regarded as having been geniuses whose thoughts were so deep that they were too difficult for laymen to understand. Bryan Magee describes this in a conversation with Peter Singer, "So obscure is it [Hegel's writings] that many outstanding philosophers from Schopenhauer to Russell have sincerely maintained that it didn't say anything at all, that it was nothing but charlatantry...Why did Hegel write like that?" (Magee 202). Singer answers sympathetically:

Some of his less charitable critics thought he was deliberately obscure in order to cover the shallowness of his ideas. But I don't think Hegel's ideas are shallow. I think they are profound...in the context of German philosophical style at the time, it is not so surprising that he didn't feel the need for clarity. After all, Kant, Fichte and other contemporaries were also very obscure, and they were still regarded as great philosophers. (Magee 202)

Rand was not so understanding with regard to the basic conflicts raised by the philosophies of Hegel and Kant. It is safe to say that she was one of their "less charitable critics."

Rand considered the philosophies of Kant and Hegel, and later Marx, as only serving to add an element of confusion and cognitive dissonance to the already backward philosophies that were most prevalent across the globe. It was not enough that they preached altruism, the philosophy of self-sacrifice; they now had planted the seed of doubt into the minds of many men that reality even existed. She was not alone in her concerns. Magee also voiced similar worries regarding the trend that the Empiricists and Rationalists had started, “This claim to divide propositions exhaustively into those two classes created a serious problem not only for philosophy but also for the natural sciences, because unrestricted general scientific laws are also propositions that are neither analytic nor straightforwardly factual – they can’t be deductively arrived at by logic, nor can they be proved from experience” (Magee 173-174). As previously mentioned, it was one of Rand’s firmly held principles that a rational man could not accept a contradiction, for it represented an error in his judgment. This is, in part, why she felt that Kant and Hegel must have been mistaken and why there must be another explanation to resolve the conflicts presented in their theories. She recognized that in the 20th century these conflicts were causing men’s minds to become unsettled, and she watched as this mentality subtly slipped into the thought processes of good people in Europe and in the United States. She knew full well that the confusion of men was to be used as a tool against them by whomever pleased. In a 1974 article, she noted this strategy:

“Don’t be so sure – nobody can be certain of anything.” Bertrand Russell’s gibberish to the contrary notwithstanding, that pronouncement includes itself; therefore, one cannot be sure that one cannot be sure of anything...if nobody can be certain of anything, then everybody can be certain of anything, then everybody can be certain of everything he pleases – since it cannot be refuted, and he can claim he is not certain he is certain (which is the purpose of that notion). (“Philosophical Detection” 19)

Rand felt that this attitude was just another deliberate form of demagoguery. She believed so much in the importance of the issue that she made it one of the principle themes of *Atlas Shrugged*. Throughout the novel, the antagonists put on full display the

damaging effects of believing that certainty is unachievable. Jim Taggart tried to use this philosophy as an excuse for his ineptitude many times, once saying, “There are no absolutes – as Dr. Pritchett has proved irrefutably. Nothing is absolute. Everything is a matter of opinion. How do you know that the bridge hasn’t collapsed? You only *think* it hasn’t. How do you know that there’s any bridge at all?” (*Atlas Shrugged* 248). The protagonists, on the other hand, struggle to grasp the full significance of the fact that existence exists until Rand’s first major dissection of these philosophies was given in John Galt’s speech. Through basic logic, Galt establishes the counterargument to the theories of unreality:

Existence exists – and the act of perceiving that statement implies two corollary axioms: that something exists which one perceives and one exists possessing consciousness, consciousness being the faculty of perceiving that which exists. If nothing exists, there can be no consciousness: a consciousness with nothing to be conscious of is a contradiction in terms. A consciousness conscious of nothing but itself is a contradiction in terms: before it could identify itself as consciousness, it had to be conscious of something. If that which you claim to perceive does not exist, what you possess is not consciousness. (*Atlas Shrugged* 929)

Galt’s description that what is perceived exists is a mere restatement of Aristotle’s simplistically brilliant statement that A is A – what *is* exists. Galt then goes on to explain how man gains his knowledge through both his ability to sense the world around him and his unique ability to conceptualize his perceptions. He starts by saying that, “Existence is Identity, Consciousness is Identification.” For Galt, the importance of this statement is crucial:

The purpose of those who taught you to evade it [the concept that A is A], was to make you forget that Man is Man. Man cannot survive except by gaining knowledge, and reason is his only means to gain it. Reason is the faculty that perceives, identifies and integrates the material provided by his senses. The task of his senses is to give him the evidence of existence, but the task of identifying it belongs to his reason; his senses

tell him only that something *is*, but *what* it is must be learned by his mind. (*Atlas Shrugged* 930)

In having her hero make this assertion, Rand rejected the ideas of Rationalism and Empiricism by saying that one cannot ignore the world around him, nor can he negate his natural ability to reason and conceptualize that which makes up the world. Galt went on to say that the contradictions submitted by Kant and Hegel did not go unidentified by their proponents. He alleges that the fact that they were left unresolved shows that both philosophies are based on intellectual laziness and dishonesty:

If devotion to truth is the hallmark of morality, then there is no greater, nobler, more heroic form of devotion than the act of a man who assumes the responsibility of thinking...Thinking is man's basic virtue, from which all others proceed. And his basic vice, the source of all his evils, is that nameless act which all of you practice but struggle never to admit: the act of blanking out, the willful suspension of one's consciousness, the refusal to think – not blindness, but the refusal to see; not ignorance, but the refusal to know. (*Atlas Shrugged* 931)

Not only did Rand see this practice as lackadaisical and deceptive, she accused its advocates of intentionally causing harm to mankind by preaching the inability of men to achieve even the most basic feat of acquiring knowledge. She said if one understands that, since the Rationalists and Empiricists, “philosophy has been striving to prove that man's mind is impotent, that there's no such thing as reality and we wouldn't be able to perceive it if there were – you will realize the magnitude of the treason involved” (“The Chickens Homecoming” 108). Rand did not hold back in her criticism of this treason, getting straight to the point, “Kant is the most evil man in mankind's history” (“Brief Summary” 4). Rand refused to allow herself to justify her ideas through shallow and ambiguous explanations, so to prove her point, she turned to one of the most famous examples of human triumph in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, that of Helen Keller.

Keller was born in 1880 without the capacity to see or to hear. As a deaf and blind young girl, her family did not have much hope that she would ever live anything

more than a slightly sub-human life. With her two most important senses unavailable to her, she had a much more difficult time understanding the world or conceptualizing that which she perceived through her three remaining senses. Rand described her situation, saying Keller was “neither human nor animal, with all the power of human potential, but reduced to a sub-animal helplessness; a savage, violent, hostile creature...a human mind (proved later to be an unusually intelligent mind) struggling frantically, in total darkness and silence, to perceive, to grasp, to *understand*” (“Kant Versus Sullivan” 123). According to Kant and the Rationalist school of thought, she would have been born with *a priori* knowledge and the awareness of the outside world would be relatively insignificant. Hegel’s philosophy took it a step further and would have meant that Keller’s dark and silent world was only a projection of her own consciousness, immediately giving rise to more contradictions regarding one’s being trapped in their self-created reality without the means of escaping it. Clearly, Rand’s example proved that existence did, indeed, exist, and that sensory perception was a necessary aspect of how a human being conceives reality. That having been clearly demonstrated, Rand went on to prove to the Empiricists that knowledge did exist and that the human mind was also a necessary tool for acquiring it. To do this, Rand turned to Keller’s young and innovative teacher, Annie Sullivan, who was determined to help Helen overcome her disabilities and live a full and happy human life. Sullivan knew that in order to teach Keller anything at all, she would first have to show her that she was trying to communicate with her, then teach her a single word (a concept), and gradually expand upon that base to instill in her an entire language. Sullivan knew, as did Rand, that all human knowledge grew from man’s unique ability to communicate through language. Rand explained her position regarding this fact:

In order to be used as a single unit, the enormous sum integrated by a concept has to be given the form of a single, specific, *perceptual* concrete, which will differentiate it from all other concretes and from all other concepts. This is the function performed by language. Language is a code of visual-auditory symbols that serves the psycho-epistemological function of converting concepts into the mental equivalent of concretes. (*Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* 11)

Sullivan struggled and fought to achieve her goal of having Keller conceptualize just one word. She did this by repeatedly placing one hand in water or having her taste cake as she spelled the word in the palm of Keller's other hand. She repeated this frustratingly fruitless process over and over and did not give up hope until one day her work finally saw positive results when touching water with one hand, Keller spelled it back to Sullivan with the other. Rand recounted this moment as portrayed in a play that she had seen called *The Miracle Worker*, starring Anne Bancroft as Sullivan and Patty Duke as Keller, "The sound of Anne Bancroft's voice when she calls Helen's mother and cries: "She *knows!*" The quietly sublime intensity of that word – with everything it involves, connotes and makes possible – is what modern philosophy is out to destroy" ("Kant Versus Sullivan" 126). Keller's tremendous undertaking followed by her utterly improbable triumph was all the proof that Rand needed to support her assertion that existence exists and that to acquire knowledge of reality one must utilize one's sensory apparatus along with one's interpretive faculties as a means of comprehension.

Embarking upon the second half of the twentieth century, Rand had defended her theory of reality through simple, common sense observations and many in the scientific community had already thrown aside the Rationalist and Empiricist theories, but there were still a significant number of existence deniers in the world of the intelligentsia, especially in the academic community. Rand saw an article called "Science Without Experience" by Paul K. Feyerabend in the November 20, 1969 issue of *The Journal of Philosophy* as the perfect example of how such illogical theories were infiltrating philosophical and academic thought. The subject of the article was the hypothetical possibility of carrying out scientific experiments without receiving any sensory information. Feyerabend proposed that "It must be possible to imagine a natural science without sensory elements" ("Kant Versus Sullivan" 113-114). He continued to say how the experiment would be arranged, "We can put a theory into a computer, provide the computer with suitable instruments directed by him (her, it) so that relevant measurements are made which return to the computer, leading there to an evaluation of the theory" (114). His scheme immediately raises obvious questions to anyone with a critical mind. Rand listed just a few of them, "Who built the computer, and was he able to do it without sensory experience? Who programs the computer and by what means? Who provides the computer with 'suitable instruments' and how does he know what is

suitable? How does the scientist know that the object he is dealing with is a computer?” and the list goes on and on (114). Rand was disconcerted at the influence that the views of Kant and Hegel were having on individuals in both Europe and America. She saw such ideas as absurd distortions of reality that led to ridiculous opinions by people who, due to their level of education, one would assume would be more intelligent. She used the conclusion of Feyerabend’s article as an example:

Usually such information travels via the senses, giving rise to distinct sensations. But this is not always the case. Subliminal perception [of what?] leads to reactions directly, and without sensory data. Latent learning leads to memory traces [of what?] directly, and without sensory data. Posthypnotic suggestion [by whom and by what means?] leads to (belated) reactions directly, and without sensory data. In addition there is the whole unexplored field of telepathic phenomena. (“Kant Versus Sullivan” 115; Bracketed comments in the original)

Rand knew that this way of thinking had already led to a weaker philosophy and a weaker society. Its influence stretched not only to science and politics, but to the personal philosophies of individuals all across Europe; slowly making its way to the United States. The new system of morality was structured by Friedrich Nietzsche, whose philosophical beliefs were guided by the teachings of Kant and Hegel.

Rand feared that the consequences of these philosophies would be so great that they would eventually lead to the destruction of Western society. During her lifetime, Kant, Marx, and Nietzsche became the mostly widely taught philosophers in European high schools and universities. Nietzsche agreed with his philosophical counterparts, Marx and Hegel, that nothing which one sees is truly real, saying of Kant’s last remnant of reality, “The ‘thing-in-itself’ is a nonsensical concept. If I remove all the relationships, all the ‘properties,’ all the ‘activities’ of a thing, nothing remains. Thingness has only been invented by us to fit the requirements of logic. In other words, with the aim of defining, of communication” (*Will to Power* 558). Nietzsche became one of the leading proponents of the personal philosophy (nihilism) that accompanied Kant’s general philosophy and Marx’s political ideals. Nihilism taught that there was no such thing as objectivity and that since there was no point to life, one could live it any

way one pleases. This led to a societal acceptance of the loafer, the dropout, and the underachiever. Nietzsche's theory caused an explosion of apathy throughout Western culture. 'What's the point, anyway? Why not just do whatever I want?' became the *modus operandi* for a multitude of young people in the 1960's and 1970's in much of Europe and the USA. Rand's philosophy became a counterweight to the 'flower power and free love' culture that was prevalent amongst the youth at the time because she laid out strict guidelines by which to live in contrast to a Nihilistic free-for-all. Her popularity was due to the fact that many felt hers was a life-affirming philosophy. Objectivism taught that what one perceives is real, what one knows is true, and that every individual had been endowed with the power to shape his or her own future. As Rand saw the classical ideals of Europe and the United States slipping away, and she shuddered when she imagined the effects that this shift would have on the future of these great cultures if the philosophies of unreality, collectivism, and indifference were not confronted with bold, unapologetic conviction.

When Rand was just a young girl, she observed how corrupt and misguided ideologies could change the direction of individuals from good to evil and from passionate to apathetic. She watched disappointedly as, decade after decade, country after country fell into the same trap. Rand noticed a pattern throughout the world that, when a region fell into a time of crisis, the individuals who stood for good tended to choose comfort over principle, clearing the path for injustice and misery to reign without opposition. Rand knew that, because the strength of government is the strength of physical force and nothing else, aggression was inherent in those who held positions of power. She also realized that, even in the most democratic of republics, the real authority to rule was in the hands of a select few. Thus, the explicit malevolence seen in many regimes was only practiced by a limited number of individuals in a given society and, for this reason, she did not leave the blame to reside wholly with those few tyrants, saying:

The truly and deliberately evil men are a very small minority; it is the appeaser who unleashes them on mankind; it is the appeaser's intellectual abdication that invites them to take over. When a culture's

dominant trend is geared to irrationality, the thugs win over the appeasers. When intellectual leaders fail to foster the best in the mixed, unformed, vacillating character of the people at large, the thugs are sure to bring out the worst. When the ablest men turn into cowards, the average men turn into brutes. (“Altruism as Appeasement” 6)

Rand understood well that, just a few generations before, the people of the world had not been so passively irresolute. Revolutions by the peoples of France and the United States rejected tyranny and fought against seemingly insurmountable odds to win the freedom to govern themselves. The American colonists, in particular, did not wait passively as the monarchy in Britain sapped them dry of the fruits of their hard labors. Two issues, relatively insignificant compared to the abusive policies of governments throughout the world today, the right to issue one’s own currency and the right to not be taxed without just representation were enough to bring a small population of farmers to war with the most powerful military force that the world had ever seen. James Madison commented on the quick call to arms:

It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The freemen of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedent. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. (“Memorial and Remonstrance” 163)

Governments all across the Western world have done more in the last six months to further the cause of tyranny and diminish the democratic rights of the sovereign people, and, yet, the average citizen is not even aware of the crisis and many more simply do not care. The abuses have raised the ire of only a slim minority, a minority that has been ridiculed by the press and by many of its representatives while the majority of citizens lethargically carry on with their daily lives. Rand attributed this dramatic shift to the growing popularity of two philosophies from the late 19th century, Marx’s communism

and Nietzsche's nihilism. It was Rand's supposition that the success of communist uprisings was not possible were it not for the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy of classism, hedonism, and indifference.

Early in her career, when Rand was still shaping her philosophical thought, she supported aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy regarding the will to power and achieving *Übermensch* (the Superman). This belief was based on the idea that there exist a few great beings amongst men that live life to the fullest and become the best version of themselves. According to Nietzsche, these men were so great that they should not be bound by the morals of religion or the laws of society. He believed that they should create their own set of values based solely on that which would bring them pleasure and power. J.P. Stern, 20th century authority on German literature and professor at University College London, described the theory like this:

He [Nietzsche] believed that human greatness, the best in man, was rare – and the concomitant of that is the belief that the appeal to a common denominator in men is necessarily an appeal to the lowest, or to that which is least distinguished in them. In a sense all rules and regulations – one might almost go as far as to say all laws – are for him matters for the common herd, no more. (Magee 237)

The values of Nietzsche's supermen were to be determined by them and for them so that they might rule over the worthless masses. It is not difficult to recognize why this mentality became a source of encouragement for dictators throughout the 20th century. Stern said that it was Nietzsche's call to "create your own values and live by them, regardless of the consequences" (Magee 242). Bryan Magee continued Stern's commentary, "He saw mankind as a rabble led by an elite, and he thought the elite were entirely right to be selfish, to sweep aside the weak and unable and simply seize for themselves whatever they wanted. How, on this basis, the individual members of the elite were also going to be able to live with each other was something which, as you say, he never considered" (Magee 242). This would be considered another clear example of what Rand called the philosophical 'blank out.' The men who believed they were supermen acted regardless of the consequences. The cost, in terms of lives, of their egomaniacal beliefs tallied in the millions. His influence, whether explicit or implicit,

on the dictators of the World War II era was great, said Stern, “I think he must be associated with it to some extent – and Fascism rather than National Socialism. Mussolini read him extensively, and received a copy of the *Collected Works* as a present from the Führer on the Brenner Pass in 1938” (Magee 250). The success of the men who lived by the theory of the superman, or at least used it to justify their actions, would not have been possible were it not for indifference of the general population. This wide-ranging lack of concern was another symptom of Nietzsche’s philosophy, a part that would later be called nihilism.

Though at first she agreed with parts of Nietzsche’s ideology, Rand later rejected his philosophy outright because of the notions that existence does not exist and that there is no verifiably uniform moral code for men. Nihilism preached that individuals should live to chase their instinctual desires at every whim, as long as it brought them closer to their ultimate goal of power. Momentary pleasure was the aim of nihilism, and Nietzsche taught that any other standard of moral value was impossible to define and, thus, irrelevant. The 2004 Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes this sentiment, defining nihilism as, “a viewpoint that traditional values and beliefs are unfounded and that existence is senseless and useless.” Just as Rand thought that the philosophical view of non-reality of Kant and Hegel was harmful to men and only served to confuse and disorient them, she also saw nihilism as a severe blow to the moral character of men. She loathed the ideologies of Marx and Nietzsche because they were altruistic in nature, meaning that they called for some men to be sacrificed for the good of others. Marx did this by subjugating the individual to the always indefinable ‘society,’ while, according to Rand:

Nietzsche’s rebellion against altruism consisted of replacing the sacrifice of oneself to others by the sacrifice of others to oneself. He proclaimed that the ideal man is moved, not by reason, but by his ‘blood,’ by his innate instincts, feelings and will to power – that he is predestined by birth to rule others and sacrifice them to himself, while *they* are predestined by birth to be his victims and slaves – that reason, logic, principles are futile and debilitating, that morality is useless, that the ‘superman’ is ‘beyond good and evil,’ that he is a ‘beast of prey’ whose

ultimate standard is nothing but his own whim. (*For the New Intellectual*, 39)

Nietzsche's superman was a being without restrictions or confines, limitless in his power to spread evil. Being that Nietzsche did not believe in moral maxims, he did not mind if pain and misery were the results of his philosophy. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra IV*, he lamented that men were not more wicked:

'Man is evil' – all the wisest men have told me that to comfort me. Oh, if only this were true today! For evil is man's strength. 'Man must grow better and more evil' – this is what I teach. The greatest evil is necessary for the superman's greatest triumph. Perhaps it was good the poor peoples' sage took upon himself and suffered the sins of humanity. I, on the other hand, rejoice in great sins as my consolation. (64)

When put into practice throughout Europe, there were many grave consequences caused by this 'anything goes' mentality. For those psychotic enough to classify themselves as supermen, they were now given the moral *carte blanche* to take by force whatever they pleased. Since they were also taught that their victims were only projections of their own consciousness, they were able to rationalize with themselves that it did not matter who they trampled on their way to power. This philosophy opened the door to maniacal dictators across Europe. According to Nietzsche, the predominant philosopher of the time, there was no more morality and the only goal in life was to accumulate as much power as possible. Evil men such as Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco took advantage of this and quickly became the sole rulers of their countries – ruling with iron fists.

Rand noted that, while dictators were claiming country after country for themselves, many Europeans had fallen victim to Nietzsche's declaration that no moral code was valid and that everyone must live by instinctual momentary whim. This led to an unapologetic culture of hedonism in many pockets of Europe. At the same time and in a much more subtle manner, Europeans were quickly losing their sense of outrage. A new moral indifference had swept the land and it was called *tolerance*. Rand saw firsthand during the Russian Revolution the terrifying violence that accompanied the

new culture of passivity. She was still horrified, but not surprised, decades later when the stories of the Holocaust began to appear in American newspapers. It was written that the townspeople near Dachau could smell the stench of burning bodies coming from the concentration camp and did nothing. In another account, many already emaciated Jews were led on forced marches through German occupied towns while onlookers watched and did nothing. James M. Glass, professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland described the state of the German people at the time:

The practices of the Final Solution broke all historical boundaries and transvalued historical and consensual meanings attached to the words *justice, tolerance, and right*...Psychosis can also be distinguished by the unwillingness to grieve or to feel any empathy for the victims slaughtered in delusional imagination. Similarly, the major sectors of German society showed no guilt, no expression of grief, no feeling of having done anything wrong. (Glass 114)

The German people were not only tolerant onlookers, but unfeeling accomplices to genocide. They watched coldly as their fellow countrymen brought millions of lives to an end.

The German people were not the only ones whose stance of moral neutrality only acted to bolster the Nazis during their march toward world domination and genetic homogeneity. The Swiss have always been hailed for their refusal to take sides in international conflicts. Their stance in World War II was no different, even though any objective observer could easily differentiate which side stood for good and which for evil. The Swiss continued to do business with both the Axis and the Allied powers. Were it not for Swiss bankers, the Nazis would have found it much more difficult to fund their war effort and to hide stolen assets at the end of the war. Rand detested this type of moral agnosticism and called on each individual to assume the responsibility of moral judgment, saying, "There is no escape from the fact that men have to make choices; so long as men have to make choices, there is no escape from moral values; so long as moral values are at stake, no moral neutrality is possible. To abstain from condemning a torturer, is to become an accessory to the torture and murder of his victim" ("How Does One Lead a Rational Life in an Irrational Society?" 83). Thus, the

Swiss became accessories to genocide, but they were not alone in their passive guilt. A lack of courage on the part of French leaders made them also culpable for their part during the war. Under mounting pressure from his fellow Frenchmen to sign a peace accord with the Germans, Prime Minister Paul Reynaud chose to resign instead of standing up for justice. Reynaud's decision did not go unpunished as he was arrested by his successor, Philippe Pétain, and handed over to the Germans to be held as a prisoner of war until he was liberated by the Allied troops. Pétain was gutless and quickly signed an armistice with the Nazis, giving them uncontested control of the western coast of continental Europe, a position that gave them a much stronger foothold in their fight against the Allies. Pétain's refusal to take sides and stand up to evil cost the lives of tens of thousands of Allied soldiers and countless more in concentration camps who would have survived were it not for the delay of the Allies' arrival. After the war, Pétain was put on trial for his misdeeds and sentenced to death; a sentence that was commuted to life in prison by his successor, Charles De Gaulle. The leaders of France and Switzerland were all too ready to accommodate evil in the name of neutrality, and Rand knew that their mentality of passivity disguised as pacifism was one that could bring, and had brought, nations to their demise:

I will name only one principle, the opposite of the idea which is so prevalent today and which is responsible for the spread of evil in the world. That principle is: *One must never fail to pronounce moral judgment*. Nothing can corrupt and disintegrate a culture or a man's character as thoroughly as does the precept of *moral agnosticism*, the idea that one must never pass moral judgment on others, that one must be morally tolerant of anything, that good consists of never distinguishing good from evil. ("How Does One Lead a Rational Life in an Irrational Society?" 82)

The actions by Swiss and French leaders during World War II were just two extreme examples of the consequences of tolerance. Their lack of conviction was obvious and on full display for the entire world to see, but Rand was more concerned about the more common and less easily recognizable repercussions of the philosophy of tolerance.

Rand was well aware of the serious psychological consequences of Nietzsche's philosophy, not only on those who employed it, but on those who tolerated it. The philosophy eventually led Nietzsche, himself, to lose his mind completely. In an infamous incident in Turin, Italy, he ran to console a horse that was being whipped by its owner, embracing it and throwing his arms around its neck before collapsing to the ground in a stupor. An individual's personal philosophy is meant to better his or her life, making a person happier and more successful. If this is the measure of one's philosophy, then when one compares Rand's life to Nietzsche's, the results are incontrovertibly in favor of Rand. She knew that her philosophy worked for her and she wished to preach its benefits to the world. To do so, she needed to contrast her way of living and thinking to the ways of collectivists, altruists, and reality deniers.

Rand's Objectivism

Life, and the right to live as one wishes, was considered by Ayn Rand to be the highest moral value known to man. At first glance, this seems to be a universally accepted and self-evident principle, but when one takes the time to look a bit closer at the issue, it becomes clear that an individual's right to his or her own life as an unquestioned axiom of human morality is one that merits thorough investigation to understand and demands a hearty defense against those who might argue otherwise. The debate hinges on one's definition of the word "life" and the many moral precepts one considers to be tangentially valuable to its essential meaning. Rand proposed that life is not only tantamount to the time one lives in physiological terms, but can also be qualified based on the *way* one uses that time – if one lives one's life morally and to the fullest degree instead of merely going through the daily motions. The quintessence of this statement to an individual's philosophy has been touted by a countless number of great men and women throughout history, from prophets to philosophers, to soldiers and poets. According to Rand, a great majority of those who have promoted this idea throughout the ages have done so based on mystical or social grounds. That is to say that they have validated their belief in this existentialist maxim because it has either been written in their holy book or inculcated through culture that one must not be slothful and instead direct one's efforts toward the betterment of society, many times

with disregard to one's personal interests. Rand thought that a lack of a logically derived rationale eroded the argument. She found that the moral onus for each person to make the most of one's life was rooted in man's own nature, not in the mandates of a mystical figure or in the social constructs into which one was born. She explained how she arrived at this conclusion:

Man, the highest living species on this earth – the being whose consciousness has a limitless capacity for gaining knowledge – man is the only living entity born without any guarantee of *remaining* conscious at all. Man's particular distinction from all other living species is the fact that *his* consciousness is *volitional*...The faculty that directs this process [gaining knowledge], the faculty that works by means of concepts, is: *reason*. The process is *thinking*." (*The Virtue of Selfishness* 21-22)

It was Rand's strong conviction that, though alive in the physiological sense of the word, one was not truly alive if one did not take full advantage of the natural ability to think. She noted that man's capacity for logical thought was his greatest asset and was the unique faculty that man possessed that made him superior to any other species in the known universe. From this conclusion, Rand determined that if an individual does not employ this exclusively vital capacity to its full measure, that individual can existentially be considered as good as dead. Rand postulated:

When man unfocuses his mind, he may be said to be conscious in a subhuman sense of the word, since he experiences sensations and perceptions. But in the sense of the word applicable to man...an unfocused mind is *not* conscious...Existentially, the choice 'to focus or not' is the choice 'to be conscious or not.' Metaphysically, the choice 'to be conscious or not' is the choice of life or death. (*The Virtue of Selfishness* 22)

Howard Roark represents a fully conscious man. He is the image of Rand's ideal man because he is the only character who maintains full control of all his rational faculties while also possessing the self-discipline to invariably do what is right in accordance with his values. Roark determines his values through a rational analysis of

the objective reality around him and he judges the accuracy of decisions through a meticulous attention to innate human measuring stick, his conscience. Since his conscience is only capable of judging the rightness of his own decisions and actions, he spends his time with thoughts only of the choices and plans which he can control. It is through this strict internalization of his world and an adherence to the values which he has chosen for himself that he finds true and lasting happiness. Roark is so introspective that he is often unaware of events happening near him that affect his life but are just outside his direct sphere of influence. Throughout her lifetime, Rand displayed similar fanatical dedication to her work while also exhibiting nonchalance toward the world around her. During the years in which she wrote *The Fountainhead*, she would hardly ever leave her desk, focusing not on the tumult all around the world at the time, but almost exclusively on her work. She would come out of her room only to spend short spurts of time with her husband, Frank O'Connor, before returning to her typewriter. Her regard for the rest of world was not apathetic, but tended toward a unique sort of aggravated comprehension of humanity's ails with a belief that her best long-term means of effecting positive change would be through her writings. Rand, though she recused herself from direct interaction with the outside world, to a certain point, always had as an end goal to confront the progress of collectivism and to defend the perpetuity of American Individualism. Unlike the author who created him, Roark, a romanticized character, holds no such urge to sway the outcomes of any matters that do not specifically pertain to him and his aspirations. Akin to the method of his maker, however, Roark refuses to decide values and ambitions by divine inspiration.

Such an important choice, maybe the most important in one's life, – to live life fully or merely to survive it until one's light is inevitably extinguished – has historically been dictated to people through religious dogma. Relatively recently in the story of mankind, religion's dominion over the personal philosophy of individuals has begun to wane. Rand fiercely opposed religion and saw it as a primitive form of excusing oneself from the obligation of deliberate thought. If everyone were given a book that was written by a supreme being, an all-knowing figure that created the universe and everything in it, no one would be required to evaluate the validity of the dictums that book presented. The common defense posed was: if God or Allah or Yahweh or Zeus said it, then *men* are not worthy of questioning his judgment. The answer to each and

every dilemma that might arise through the course of one's life was handed over without requiring any thought whatsoever in making the decision.

In the second half of the 19th century, following the Enlightenment of the century before, and in reaction to Charles Darwin's new and revolutionary Theory of Evolution, religiosity in the Western world began to decline at an ever increasing rate. The new ideas regarding the origins of man and other species led many to at first question the legitimacy of their religious doctrines, and later to abandon the teachings completely. The throwing aside of millennia old customs and beliefs left humanity to deal with a philosophical vacuum, an empty space that many men forgot to refill. One of the greatest American writers of the 19th century, and one of its best commentators on the subject of the affairs of the world at the time, was Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1861, he took note of the impact on mankind of this peculiar trend in religion and philosophy:

We live in a transitional period, when the old faiths which comforted nations, and not only so, but made nations, seem to have spent their forces...A silent revolution has loosed the tension of the old religious sects, and, in place of the gravity and permanence of those societies of opinion, they run into freak and extravagance...From this change, and in the momentary absence of any religious genius that could offset the immense material activity, there is a feeling that religion is gone.

(Conduct of Life 181-182)

Without religion to provide a philosophy to guide their lives, men were now left to wander without direction through their semi-existence. The global economy was growing at its fastest rate in history, leaving men no cause for concern or reflection. Humanity had started its patient drift toward a philosophical no man's land. Personal philosophies were becoming a thing of the past, to be discarded along with the ancient religions with which they had come. For Rand, this shift to an ethical void signaled a roadblock on man's three century long boom that brought about both material and moral affluence. She often proclaimed that a philosophy was an integral part of each individual's life and that those without rationally determined principles would inevitably flounder:

As a human being, you have no choice about the fact that you need a philosophy. Your only choice is whether you define your philosophy by a conscious, rational, disciplined process of thought and scrupulously logical deliberation – or let your subconscious accumulate a junk heap of unwarranted conclusions...integrated by your subconscious into a kind of mongrel philosophy and fused into a single, solid weight: *self-doubt*, like a ball and chain in the place where your mind's wings should have grown. (“Philosophy: Who Needs It” 7)

To Rand, one's capacity for rational thought was the vehicle that powered a man's life. It was that which brought men from caves and stones to skyscrapers and transcontinental railroads. She feared that without a proper philosophy, men were bound to cascade back into the Stone Age. Thus she chided any practice or belief that moved men to negate their nature and abstain from using their greatest asset: their minds.

Rand bemoaned religion in any form, saying it was man's free pass to forego his natural duty to think, thus she became one of the most outspoken atheists of the 20th century. She decided when she was just a teenager that she would be an atheist and never repented her choice. She was never shy in voicing her opinion regarding any and every topic, and since an individual's faith in a higher power is such a sensitive and private matter, she came across as especially biting and scornful when she spoke of her anti-religious ideas. At high class public gatherings, she would often approach someone she would otherwise hold in high esteem and tell the person that he or she was moronic for believing in God. William F. Buckley, one of the most prominent conservatives of the late 20th century, recalls the first time he met Rand, “Now the first time I was introduced to her it was at some sort of a party and she said, ‘You are too intelligent to believe in God!’” (“William Buckley on Ayn Rand & Atlas Shrugged”). Her direct and abrasive manner was not limited to those whom she encountered at casual social events. She called any and every faithful believer lazy and stupid. In doing so she was accusing a great majority of the world's population of being gullible dimwits. In defense of her harsh stance on religion, she often referred to John Galt's speech in *Atlas Shrugged*:

For centuries, the battle of morality was fought between those who claimed that your life belongs to God and those who claimed that it

belongs to your neighbors...And no one came to say that your life belongs to you and that the good is to live it. Both sides agreed that morality...is not the province of reason, but the province of faith and force...Whatever else they fought about, it was against man's mind that all your moralists have stood united...Now choose to perish or to learn that the anti-mind is the anti-life. (926)

Like Galt, all of Rand's protagonists were anti-faith and pro-thought. They lived for themselves and justified all their actions by means of conscious, rational conclusions. Like Rand, they did not accept any tenet based solely on faith. They held only convictions based on a lifetime of logically critical deductions.

Throughout history, men have left the most important decisions in their lives – those of the meaning of life, God, and politics – up to faith. These choices govern the way in which an individual lives his or her life, with whom one does or does not associate, and many times who will be entrusted with the tremendous power of the force of government to reign over society. With regard to 21st century religion, it is apparent that most of the faithful have not even read their holy book from cover-to-cover, let alone studied the history of their religion, around which they base many consequential life decisions. A great majority of faithful believers ascribe to their religion based almost completely on the fact that they were born into it. Richard Dawkins, Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University and one of the most candid atheists of the early 21st century, has taken note of the curious tendency for devout religious persons to believe with all their being that theirs is the correct faith while, at the same time, disregarding all others as myths and fairy tales. He says, “We are all atheists about most of the gods that societies have ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further” (“The Root of All Evil?”). The aforementioned author, Ralph Waldo Emerson, made a similar observation, “The religion of one age is the literary entertainment of the next” (*The God Delusion* 29). This statement is truer now than ever before, with Disney movies and a television series based on the Roman demigod, Hercules, and with the growing secular media publishing satirical cartoons that caricature holy figures such as Jesus of Nazareth and Islam's holy prophet, Mohammed. Many religious groups moderate their passions and do not lash out when ridiculed, but

some extremists take their faiths so seriously that they neglect basic universal moral precepts in exchange for violent vendettas.

In the first decade of the 21st century, violent conflicts all around the globe have dominated world events and changed the direction of governments everywhere. The global war on terrorism has pushed the United States to stretch its armed forces to a breaking point and arguably changed the outcome of the national elections in Spain in 2004, when almost 200 people were killed in bombings at the Madrid train station. In just the first decade and a half of this new century, there have been large-scale attacks by extreme Islamists in London, Bali, New York City, Ft. Hood (TX), Mumbai, San Bernardino, Boston, Paris, Brussels and throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The growing prosperity gap between Western societies and Muslim nations has caused resentment and increased the number of fanatical members in its communities while the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere have simultaneously exacerbated this crisis while combating it. The Islamist interpretation of the Koran has become one of the strongest forces generating instability in the modern world. The radical Iranian government has explicitly stated its intention to eliminate Israel and exterminate every Jew on the planet, a notion that is supported by Hamas, the democratically elected Palestinian government in Gaza, and by many other Muslim extremist groups all over the world. This would merely be the rants of wild-eyed madmen were it not for the fact that the Iranian government is working overtime to build a nuclear bomb, a fact that was recently admitted openly by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. The Islamic extremist threat is only the 21st century manifestation of the same philosophical problem that has been repeated in almost every religion at some point in history. Protestants and Catholics bloodied the soil of Ireland during much of the last century. The Spanish Inquisition and the Crusades brought Christian tyranny to millions. It is also well documented that the Aztecs in pre-Colombian America gave their prisoners of war as human sacrifices to their gods. Millions of individuals through history have abandoned rational morality for blind faith and have committed horrible atrocities in the name of an unseen and still unproven higher being. According to Rand, this recurring cycle of violence proves that the problem is not Islamic or Christian or Aztecan, it is a philosophical dilemma that arises when individuals determine that their personal philosophy, which is shaped by unquestioned *faith* in a holy book, trumps all others.

Ayn Rand was more often harshly critical of religious faiths though she sometimes acknowledged the positive impact that many belief systems had on philosophy. She praised historical believers such as St. Thomas Aquinas for their attempts to use scientific fact and logic to justify their faith. She disagreed with their conclusions and said that these figures never came close to proving the existence of their god, but she gave them credit for at least having made an attempt to explain their beliefs through rational thought. Just as she applauded a select few theologians for their effort to step past blind faith and validate their religion through careful observation of reality, she temperately commended the first juvenile steps of religion toward what she deemed to be a greater philosophy. She saw religion as the ancient version of philosophy, man's first try at making sense of the world around him. Of this she said, "Since religion is a primitive form of philosophy – an attempt to offer a comprehensive view of reality – many of its myths are distorted, dramatized allegories based on some element of truth, some actual, if profoundly elusive, aspect of man's existence" ("Philosophy and Sense of Life").

She admitted that religion had played a crucial part in the structuring and maintenance of society, and also provided the base upon which modern philosophy was built. The American Founders, whom Rand admired, saw an important role for religion in sculpting moral character and creating unity in society. They felt that religion was such a vital part of the new country that they could not survive without religion as a guide. The first American president, George Washington, spoke on this matter, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports...And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion...Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail to the exclusion of religious principle" (*Basic American Documents*). The Founders tended not to discriminate between religions since the early colonists had come to the New World to escape religious persecution. They did seek, however, to keep religion as the bedrock of morality for the country and the government. For Benjamin Franklin, any reputable religion that would help to form that bedrock must preach the following:

Here is my creed: I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe. That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That

the most acceptable service we render to him is in doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion. (*The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*)

The fact was not lost on Rand that religion was a powerful force for good during the first hundred years of the United States' existence. She had read the words of Alexis De Tocqueville describing his experiences in America in the early 1800's. De Tocqueville told of how America's religious devotion lifted it to become a great nation:

I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there; in her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there; in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great. (Benson)

The goodness of America was its most important asset and one that was brought to life through the teachings of a moral philosophy in the church. Most of the Founders were deeply religious and openly shared their faith in God. Thomas Jefferson, like Rand, is widely regarded to have been one of the few non-believers amongst the crowd of faithful. Unlike Rand, though, he placed great value in religion and its place in contemporary society. Where he differentiated from his counterparts and returned to a parallel with Rand was in his conviction that one's religious beliefs, like any other belief, must be factually justifiable and lead a person to a rationally principled life. When criticized about his lack of faith, Jefferson gave this well-known response, "Say nothing of my religion. It is known to my God and myself alone. Its evidence before the world is to be sought in my life; if that has been honest and dutiful to society, the religion which has regulated it cannot be a bad one" (*The Jefferson Bible: The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* 7). It was a personal philosophy by this creed that Rand did not assault a person's religion because she understood the value that religion had in

society, but she continued to stress the importance of substantiating one's beliefs through verifiable facts.

Rand's contention was that if one truly believes that his religion is correct and that his God is the one and only Creator and savior of the universe, then he should find joy in the endeavor to *prove* to others that this is the truth. Surely if there is a God, then He produced the reality in which mankind lives and He also created men. Thus men must have the capacity to understand their Creator and reality must be riddled with the evidence of His existence. According to Rand, it was not her duty to prove a negative – that God does not exist – but was the obligation of men and women of faith to venture to know through logical reason and observable proof that God does, *in fact*, exist. Rand was clear that she discounted religion not specifically because of many of its teachings, which as the Founders advocated could have a positive benefit to society, but because it asked man to not only be mindless, but to subjugate his mind to the whims of a still unproven higher being. Like many other aspects of her philosophy, she voiced this point through John Galt and his famous speech:

God is that which no human mind can know, they say – and proceed to demand that you consider it knowledge – God is non-man, heaven is non-earth, soul is non-body, virtue is non-profit...Man's mind, say the mystics of spirit, must be subordinated to the will of God...Man's standard of value, say the mystics of spirit, is the pleasure of God, whose standards are beyond man's power of comprehension and must be accepted on faith...The purpose of man's life...is to become an abject zombie who serves a purpose he does not know, for reasons he is not to question. (*Atlas Shrugged* 940, 947).

Rand's dispute was not with the belief itself, but with the fact that one's personal philosophy was dictated to them through blind faith from an invisible force. For her, one's convictions must be conceived through a careful analysis of empirically verifiable facts that are knowable in an objective reality.

Conclusions Regarding Objectivism

After having reached the pinnacle of the literary world, Rand set out to create an extensive philosophical defense for the ideas upon which the country she grew to love

was founded. In the words of Dr. Yaron Brook, “Intellectually and philosophically, Ayn Rand completes the American Revolution.” Though her thousands of pages of non-fiction writings cover a wide range of diverse topics and disciplines, the two most essential elements to her buttressing of the American Individualist ideals were those of Individualism and Objectivism. These facets not only emerged from her acute disdain for anything related to Marxism, a disdain which stemmed from her negative experiences with the ideology at a young age, but they also gelled with traditionally accepted American values. Individualism is the philosophical brick and mortar of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that proclaimed and, later, legally protected the natural rights of the individual over the rights of the collective. Objectivism, though never previously stated so explicitly until Rand, is typically American in its Aristotelian view of reality and its reliance on men’s rational faculties. Americans not only inherently accepted this notion of reality, but held a naturally optimistic ‘You can do anything if you put your mind to it’ attitude based on their confidence in the power of each individual’s capacity for reason. Rand’s non-fiction philosophical exploits may have accomplished her goal to a large degree amongst a small minority of citizens with enough patience and education to comprehend the weighty material, and they may be fine for a post-graduate level discussion, but the average reader has neither the time nor the energy to invest in delving through Rand’s entire philosophical catalog, and much less those of the many thinkers who she criticizes. With this said, her two seminal novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, which predate her non-fiction writings, have been and continue to be read by a much wider audience and have been considerably more effective in conveying her ideas, even to the highly educated portion of her readership. Her themes and her literary style have resonated with Americans, both positively and negatively, in a way that is unprecedented, bringing about a level of practical influence that is unparalleled among modern literary figures. The following and final section of this dissertation examines the features of her fiction that explain this phenomenon, with specific focus on the book that launched her into the American spotlight, *The Fountainhead*.

CHAPTER 5

The Fountainhead as Ayn Rand's Art of American Fiction

“The American experience is not really measured by the Bible, but rather, the Bible is understood through American experience” (742). Though James Madison University Professor A.J. Morey made the preceding statement with regard to the interrelatedness of American mythmaking and the Christian tradition, any genuine analysis of *The Fountainhead* must be viewed in this same light. One must not only examine the features of the novel that created and maintained a meaningful relationship with the American people, but one must also take a look at the author's understanding of the American people which she incorporated into her writings, both consciously and subconsciously, to construct a book that would strike such a profound and lasting chord. With this in mind, it is vital to note that, since its first publication in 1943, the whopping popularity and influence of the book have been almost completely contained within the borders of the United States. Professor Gene H. Bell-Villada remarked in 2004 on his observation that Rand and her novels are:

Very much an American phenomenon. Though she has some fans scattered about the U.K., the (white) British Commonwealth realms, and Scandinavia, her oeuvre is something scarcely known beyond our coastal shores and southern borders. Over the past decade I've chanced to mention La Rand to well-read Europeans and Latin Americans. Almost invariably her name draws a blank. (229)

The unlikely persistence of this trend into the 20th century may be due in part to and serve as vindication for Rand's multitude of critics in the academy, as explained in detail in this dissertation's section on previous Rand scholarship, but it also must be recognized that her relative irrelevance abroad is caused in great degree by the fact that Rand deliberately composed every aspect of the novel to resonate specifically with the

American people. She accomplished this so effectively that the combined sales of all her literature have now reached more than thirty million copies, with almost seven million copies having been sold of *The Fountainhead* alone (Boaz).

Decades after the publication of *The Fountainhead*, Rand codified her purposeful approach into an explicit theory of art called *The Romantic Manifesto* (1969), and she laid out her writing strategies in a series of lectures which were later transcribed and published in the form of *The Art of Fiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers* (2000). The two volumes give us a comprehensive insight into the mind of the writer and aid us in understanding how and why she wrote as she did. The first of the two books, her manifesto on art, is less a recitation of her thoughts on the creative process than it is a declaration of her philosophy regarding what qualifies as art, as well as an exploration of the psycho-epistemology of art's worth for the artist and the consumer. Scholars Michelle Marder Kamhi and Louis Torres describe the work, "Rand's philosophy of art is distinctive and substantial. It offers compelling answers to fundamental questions regarding the nature of art, its broadly cognitive function, and its relation to emotion" (1). Though Kamhi and Torres give an even-handed description of *The Romantic Manifesto*, they did so in a review published in the year 2000, more than thirty years after the book's first printing. The two academics acknowledge the fact that Rand's artistic philosophy went decades without serious scholarly critique, "The sparse critical response to this volume was generally superficial and disparaging, at times even hostile. Rand's theory of art itself drew virtually no substantive comment" (2). In addition to this observation, they go on to echo the findings of this dissertation's section on previous scholarship, remarking that the few analyses that the work did receive at the time focused little on her ideas and were often drenched in political biases, "The bulk of Michelson's review purported to deal with Rand's ideas on literature, but his underlying political agenda was evident in references to 'chauvinistic capitalism,' 'murderous technocratic imperialists' (22), and 'the stagnant sloughs of capitalism' (24), as well as to 'war and capital' as 'institutions designed for anti-human ends' (23)" (as cited in Kamhi and Torres 3). Considering that for a half-century most academics have found it difficult to separate their political inclinations from their criticisms not only of her novels, but also of her artistic philosophy, it is no wonder that many contemporary scholars do not take her even slightly seriously as an artist. Professor Stephen Cox of

the University of California – San Diego reflects upon this curious phenomenon, “Both her friendly and her hostile critics scarcely regard her as a novelist at all,” and world-renowned commentator, Slavoj Žižek, gives his diagnosis of the matter in his trademark fearless and frank fashion, “artistically, she is of course, worthless” (“Ayn Rand: Theory versus Creative Life” 19; “The Lesbian Session” 58). The outright dismissal of Rand as artistically “worthless” has led to a lack of serious scholarly investigation and, therefore, an absence of understanding as to why she has had such a broad and lasting impact and, just as important, why her fiction is considerably more influential than her non-fiction. To begin to resolve these unanswered questions, one must only refer to Rand’s own words from the two volumes listed above.

In her writing guide, *The Art of Fiction*, Rand asserts that all “true” works of art are forms of objective communication which indicates that her works of fiction were not ends in themselves as she sometimes claimed, but were conscious attempts to convey her ideas to the American people by communicating with them at deeper, subconscious level. Rand understood that American Individualism was grounded in the Enlightenment concept of a natural and universal morality. Since she rejected any notion of God, however, she removed the deity and changed the rhetoric, calling it now objective truth deducible through a rational analysis of reality. However one wants to describe it, Rand seized upon the tradition of American opposition to subjectivism and the embrace of commonly accepted truths to effectively express herself in the form of fiction. She explains her stance thusly:

Since all art is communication, there can be nothing more viciously contradictory than the idea of nonobjective art. Anyone who wants to communicate with others has to rely on an objective reality and on objective language. The ‘nonobjective’ is that which is dependent only on the individual subject, not on any standard of outside reality, and which is therefore incommunicable to others. When a man announces that he is a nonobjective artist, he is saying that what he is presenting cannot be communicated. Why then does he present it, and why does he claim that it is art? (*The Art of Fiction* 22)

Rand goes on to rant about several of her contemporaries who she viewed as purveyors of nonobjective art including Thomas Wolfe, Sinclair Lewis, and Gertrude Stein. She even goes as far as to say that, “If to any extent you hold the premise of nonobjectivity, then by your own choice, you do not belong in literature, or in any human activity, or on this earth” (*The Art of Fiction* 24). Their own subjective worldview and the signature belligerent nature of Rand explain why progressives in the intelligentsia have cheered these authors while they have gibed or omitted Rand from the scholarly literature, but the popularity and clout of Rand’s fiction amongst such a vast portion of American society prove that she did, indeed, correctly triangulate in her novels the long established values which progressives seek to overcome, those of American Individualism. Having fled the horrors of the Bolshevik Revolution to find personal peace and prosperity in the United States, Rand paid close attention to that which differentiated her new homeland from other countries around the world. During the nearly twenty years she spent in the United States leading up to the publication of *The Fountainhead*, she became keenly familiar with the history, philosophy, and the myths that accompanied American Individualism. She then took what she deemed her objective analysis of the American reality and romanticized it into her fictional world of things as they ought to be. Rand describes this process:

All writers rely on their subconscious. But you have to know how to work with your own subconscious...you have to be conscious of your premises in general, and of your literary premises in particular. You have to train yourself to grasp your premises clearly, not merely as general rules with a few concretes to illustrate them, but with a sufficient number of concretes so that the full meaning of the premises becomes automatic to you. Every premise that you store in your subconscious in this manner – namely, thoroughly understood, thoroughly integrated to the concretes it represents – becomes part of your writing capital. When you then sit down to write, you do not need to calculate everything in a slow, conscious way. Your inspiration comes to the exact extent of the knowledge you have stored. (*The Art of Fiction* 14-15)

Thus Rand consciously held the underlying premises of American Individualism and anti-collectivism as she designed every aspect of her fiction to resonate, both consciously and subconsciously, with American readers.

The Fountainhead's themes, plot, setting, imagery, style, and even the professions of its characters, were all part of Rand's strategy of communicating objective messages to the American people. The immediate and lasting popularity of the novel, along with its broad and expanding influence, are proof of the effectiveness of her literary approach and of her understanding of American Individualism. This section will explore Rand's literary techniques and demonstrate why they have for so long elicited such an enthusiastic response from American Individualists while stirring outrage and revulsion amongst American Progressives. To accomplish this, we start by explaining why *The Fountainhead* has been selected as the subject of this investigation instead of its more well-known stepchild, *Atlas Shrugged*. The leading contemporary Rand advocate worldwide, Dr. Yaron Brook of the Ayn Rand Institute, begins to illustrate why *The Fountainhead* is Rand's best work of literature as well as her strongest link to American Individualists, "It's his [Howard Roark's] independence, and his strength, and his rise from nothing, and his ultimate success, and his uncompromising willingness to defend his values that is incredibly appealing to Americans. It captures the American spirit in ways that I don't think any other novel does, maybe in ways that even *Atlas Shrugged* doesn't."

Why The Fountainhead and Not Atlas Shrugged?

As a matter of sheer sales numbers, name recognition, and cultural references such as the ubiquitous "Who is John Galt?" *Atlas Shrugged* wins out, so why then base such an exhaustive study on *The Fountainhead*? First, since the purpose of a dissertation is to explore and expound upon innovative ideas so as to expand the base of knowledge in one's chosen field of study, the fact that *The Fountainhead* has been under-researched by serious scholars relative to *Atlas* makes it the ideal subject of investigation for a doctoral thesis. As has been mentioned in preceding sections, much of the scholarly literature related to Rand focuses more on her philosophy and politics

than it does on her art, thus the more explicitly economic and political themes in *Atlas* are more easily citable for academics interested in that subject matter. On the other hand, the two complementary original ideas of this dissertation – that Rand’s fiction, not her extensive philosophical and current affairs writings, is uniquely influential in the contemporary sociopolitical situation, and that she achieved this by consciously constructing her fiction in an effective manner to resonate with the American people – can be more precisely examined and understood in the context of her more artistically sound novel, *The Fountainhead*. Furthermore, it is unlikely that readers would have found palatable Rand’s more explicitly moralizing *Atlas* without the loyal following she gained with the prior success of *The Fountainhead*.

From a literary perspective, *The Fountainhead* is widely regarded as a better novel, whereas *Atlas* is generally considered overly didactic. It is quite simple to deduce why this may be. As she wrote *The Fountainhead*, Rand had just moved from Hollywood to New York City, was working as a playwright, and still striving to carve out a place for herself in the literary universe. During the time she composed *Atlas*, however, she had become a reclusive star novelist and screenwriter, and much of her interaction with the outside world came in the form of her exclusive philosophical chat group, The Collective. She and her acolytes believed that *Atlas* would be the catalyst for an Objectivist social revolution, thus its weighty philosophizing tone. This fact has not been lost on scholars critical of her, “In *Atlas* Rand’s vices win out. This is a narrative inordinately made up of relentless speechifying and counter-sermonizing, the contents of which are thoroughly predictable and lacking in subtlety of any sort” (Bell-Villada 236). Not one to often recognize and, much less, acknowledge her own shortcomings, Rand railed against what she deemed to be philosophical essays and sanctimonious dialogue in the heart of a novel. Surprisingly, however, the same artistic evaluation drawn by her critics has even been made by some of Rand’s closest apprentices. Kirsti Minsaas tells of how Rand’s friend and admirer, Erika Holzer, had to consciously immunize herself against the effect of Rand’s didacticism as on full display in *Atlas*, “Holzer also reveals her resistance to Rand’s influence in her avoidance of ‘the preachy novel trap’ (39). Interestingly, this is a trap Rand herself cautioned against, having no patience for what, according to Holzer, she denounced as ‘amateurish pontificating exercises in propaganda – poor excuses for art’” (as cited in “Ayn Rand as Literary

Mentor” 106). Though *Atlas* is replete with stilted dialogue from start to finish, the clearest example of the superior artistic quality of *The Fountainhead* comes with the disparity between the climaxes of the two novels. Roark’s relatively quick monologue not only fits smoothly into the plot, but also somewhat subtly serves to add deeper layers of significance to his court case and to the novel as a whole. Galt’s seemingly unending diatribe, though, comes in the form of a forced radio lecture that has no real place within the wider plot. Professor Stephen Cox gives his take on this difference:

In *The Fountainhead*, Roark delivers a relatively brief, rhetorically effective speech that serves the double purpose of stating his essential ideas and of getting him acquitted in his climactic courtroom battle. Galt’s speech, by contrast, is a lengthy theoretical development of ideas that have already been made clear, and it is more a burden than a help to the plot. Here Rand does what she reproves Victor Hugo for doing – interrupting a narrative in order to introduce an essay. Rand violates her own literary sensibilities, and it doesn’t work. (23)

As mentioned by Cox, when Rand does not stick to “her own literary sensibilities,” her writings quickly morph into ramblings, and her organized plots turn into a hodgepodge of storyline and homily. Her faithfulness, or lack thereof, to her two most valued literary objectives is further reason to focus on *The Fountainhead* as the subject of a literary analysis rather than *Atlas Shrugged*.

The projection of an ideal man and the depiction of a Romantic sense of life are stylishly realized in *The Fountainhead* while they take a backseat to economic and political commentary in *Atlas*. With the stated writing goal of the projection of an ideal man, Rand begins *The Fountainhead* with the image of a handsome, nude, chiseled bodied Howard Roark overlooking a quarry, the rocks of which he would shape with his own hands to form towering skyscrapers upon which he would stand triumphantly in the final scene of the novel. The book begins with the hero, follows him through his trials and tribulations, and climaxes with his inevitable victory. Though John Galt is supposedly Rand’s pinnacle portrait of her perfect man, he is a mere shadow, “mostly an abstraction,” throughout most of the novel (Gray 58). He is an urban legend who is spoken of by secondary and tertiary characters, but he does not actually appear until

hundreds of pages into the book. On top of the fact that her ideal man is non-existent for much of *Atlas*, when he does finally pop up, his actions could hardly be considered those of an archetypal hero. Instead of arriving on his white horse to save the world, Galt enters with the goal of convincing the minor heroes to abandon their professions (their heroic pursuits) and shrug off any sense of responsibility they feel toward their businesses, their employees, or society as a whole. The actions of the anti-hero, Galt, lead to what can only be described as the exact opposite of a Romantic vision of a future America. As Galt and the other protagonists hide out in a valley in the mountains of Colorado, the rest of the country falls into shambles. It is a dystopian worldview until the last page of the novel when the heroes decide to reenter society to personally profit from the collapse. While *Atlas* paints the picture of an America that has committed cultural suicide and is left to suffer in the aftermath of its citizens' faulty decisions, *The Fountainhead* stays true to Rand's Romantic sense of life and sets forth a fictional world of America as things ought to be. As will be discussed in some length later in this section, as Roark's fate during his trial is unequivocally tied to that of the country. The jury, a clear metaphor for the American people, comes back with a verdict of not guilty, which signifies that there is still hope for the country because they still believe in the veracity of the values upon which the nation was founded, the same values that Roark espouses in his speech. Though he came close to hitting bottom, Roark overcomes all obstacles and triumphs because he does not sway from his principles, and the optimistic message is unambiguously communicated from Rand to the reader that America will experience a similar rebirth if it rediscovers and re-embraces its founding ideals. Rand always advocated for this Romantic outlook, while she railed against the type of dreary negativity she herself penned in the representation of an America beyond redemption in the pages of *Atlas*. As the real world becomes more complex and confusing in the twenty-first century, Roark's heroism and the novel's Romantic sense of life are sure to inspire a new generation of readers who prefer *The Fountainhead's* optimism over *Atlas's* apocalypse.

There are already signs that *The Fountainhead* is set to overtake *Atlas Shrugged* in both fame and influence during this century. The recent Rand renaissance was fueled by whopping sales of both of her epic novels, and since *The Fountainhead* had already been successfully transitioned to the silver screen in 1949, Rand fans began to call for a

motion picture to be made of *Atlas*. Though demand was obviously quite high and there was money to be made, major movie studios would not touch the project. They wanted nothing to do with a big screen adaptation of *Atlas* because for decades the consensus was that the work was not translatable to film. In fact, Prof. Larry A. Gray of Jacksonville State University wrote an entire article on the subject which he entitled “Hollywood Shrugged: Ayn Rand’s Impossible Epic.” Gray contends that a respectable film version of *Atlas* is not possible and he gives this reasoning, “Is Ayn Rand’s novel unfilmable because it preaches to rather than interacts with its audience? This article claims that the book’s hyper-seriousness dooms it as, at best, a camp film and that its elitist ideology excludes most of the general audience who might support any cinematic version” (55). It turns out that Gray was right. Though major studios would not produce the movie, independent filmmakers decided to heed the call from Rand fans and proceed with the project. The result could be considered nothing less than an unmitigated disaster. The *Atlas Shrugged* movie was divided chopped up into three parts with an aggregate run time of five hours and thirteen minutes. As the movies were released, in 2011, 2012, and 2014 respectively, they were met with critical rebuke and utter box office failure. The films were so abominably awful that each sequel was recast in an attempt to draw unhappy audiences back to the theater. Therefore, one book was converted into three movies with three completely distinct casts, making watching them back to back to back as a whole, as originally intended, just as an impossible undertaking as the production of the films to begin with. A successful motion picture version of *Atlas Shrugged* could have launched the book to new heights, but the disappointment of the pictures has put a slight damper on the enthusiasm of the novel’s legion of fans. Meanwhile, just as the *Atlas* movie bombed, talk of a *Fountainhead* film for the twenty-first century audience began to heat up. The aforementioned Rand aficionado and A-list Hollywood producer/director, Zack Snyder, has mentioned for years that his dream project is to make a new *Fountainhead* motion picture. He currently has his hands full producing and directing several of the upcoming DC Comic superhero blockbusters, but if he continues to rake in cash for studios as is expected, he will certainly have the leverage necessary to make his dream project into a reality. With the weight of a big-time Hollywood name behind it, something that the *Atlas* film did not have, a popular remake of *The Fountainhead* in the vein of the enormously

profitable series of superhero movies would propel it to levels of renown beyond that of *Atlas*. Though this is still a hypothetical at this point, there are already signs that *The Fountainhead* is set to dominate *Atlas* in the decades to come.

As American pop culture continues to spread globally, the novel that is permeated with American Individualism is beginning to make an impact in some unexpected places. As India modernizes and, in some ways, Americanizes, it is seeing a huge surge in the sales of Rand literature. Jennifer Burns describes the situation in contemporary India:

Not only do Indians perform more Google searches for Rand than citizens of any country in the world except the United States, but Penguin Books India has sold an impressive number of copies – as many as 50,000 of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* each since 2005, a number comparable to the sales there of global best-seller John Grisham. And that’s not counting the ubiquitous pirated copies of her works that are hawked at rickety street stalls, sidewalk piles, and bus stations – an honor that Rand, a fierce defender of intellectual property rights, probably would not have appreciated. (“Howard Roark in New Delhi...” 98-99)

Contrary to their statures in the States, Rand’s fresh footprint in India is led by the new popularity of *The Fountainhead*, not *Atlas*. Howard Roark holds the place of the omnipresent ideal man instead of John Galt. Burns posits that this is due in large part to the fact that *Atlas* is too overtly political, while *The Fountainhead* motivates its readers on a more emotional level. Here she explains this phenomenon:

In recent years, the so-called “Howard Roark effect” has swept across wealthy Indian society. Shortly after winning Miss India Earth, the country's top beauty pageant, in 2005, Niharika Singh cited *The Fountainhead* as her favorite book. “Ayn Rand helped me win the crown,” she declared. Other stars, including biotech queen Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, actress Preity Zinta, and soccer-player turned-dancer

Baichung Bhutia have all credited Rand with helping them succeed.
("Howard Roark in New Delhi..." 99-100)

This type of Americanization is a natural part of globalization at a moment in time when the United States is the sole remaining superpower, but it is noteworthy that a seventy-four year old novel is just now picking up steam in the second most populated country on the planet. The "Howard Roark effect" is the clearest indication yet that *The Fountainhead* will surpass *Atlas Shrugged* in terms of sales and influence in the decades to come.

The Fountainhead's superior aesthetic merits as well as its much stricter adherence to Rand's own literary goals and principles make it the prime subject for the exploration and resolution of the original ideas of this dissertation – that Rand's fiction, not her extensive philosophical and current affairs writings, is uniquely influential in the contemporary sociopolitical situation, and that she achieved this by consciously constructing her fiction in an effective manner to resonate with the American people. Additionally, the lack of serious scholarship on *The Fountainhead* and Rand as a novelist, combined with the prospect that it may supersede *Atlas Shrugged* as Rand's signature work during the twenty-first century, means that it is the ideal topic for an extensive research project at this moment in time.

Themes and Plot

Ayn Rand took great care in crafting *The Fountainhead* to revolve around two main themes: the consequences of determining one's higher values through the opinions of others in lieu of using one's rational faculties, and the primacy of the individual through the projection of the ideal man. Each of these themes, a term which Rand defines as "the summation of a novel's abstract meaning," is meant to strike a chord with the American people and, whether Rand would admit it or not, to communicate philosophical principles to her readers (*Romantic Manifesto* 82). Bordering on mimesis in her use of dialogue related to her first theme, this literary portrayal is a direct response to what she viewed as the threat of the shift toward

subjectivism in contemporary America and this trend's link to collectivist ideologies and altruistic tendencies. Given the original title of the novel, "Second-Hand Lives," it is clear that this topic, which is both negative and didactic, was initially even more central to the book than the depiction of its exalted protagonist, a fact which contradicts Rand's Romantic literary theory and the publicly stated goals of her fiction. On the other hand, in keeping with her artistic theory and writing objectives, to combat these societal ills Rand molded a hero who is classically archetypal while also distinctly American, following in the storied tradition of the American tall tale. Such larger than life protagonists naturally resonate with Americans' inherent optimism and fierce individualism, "Despite the darkening tragedies that befall American innocence, the infinite mobility of hope. The hero of the cultural text is independent, autonomous, and future-seeking – an enlarged masculine personality suitable to the territories of possibility that lie before him" (Morey 742). In putting forth such a character, Rand presents her solution to real-world social ailments in the form of an idealized fictional savior. Messiahs and demigods have been created for millennia to serve this same function, but in the United States this role was commonly filled by the tall tale, "The recapture and the presentation of the fictionalized aspects of certain figures" (Loomis 109). In other words, these tales are mythologized exaggerations of the feats of actual historical figures such as George Washington and Davey Crockett. Fully understanding this aspect of the American literary and cultural tradition, Rand purposefully skirts the edge of realism to present a hero whose extraordinary gifts are not superhuman, but instead are embellishments of real human attributes. Thus her two principal themes display the modern American woes as she sees them, as well as her remedy in the form of a realistic, morally impenetrable exemplar, and Rand's creative output simultaneously affirms and refutes her Romantic literary theory and the goals of her writing.

Rand's theme of the abdication of one's responsibility to rationally select one's values, demonstrated through caricatures and demonization of her contemporary Progressives, crystallized the root causes of socioeconomic problems for the vocal minority of Americans who felt victimized by the sweeping initiatives of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Merrill Schleier tells of how Rand sought to use fiction to reach this audience:

[The] story of the triumph of the individual over the forces of mediocrity was shaped to promote her critique of the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal economic policies. Virulently anti-Roosevelt, Rand believed that communists dominated the American political and literary scene. To combat this perceived leftist hegemony, she chose to circulate her individualist credo, “as the Reds do ... in the form of fiction ... because it arouses the public.” ... Writing to one of her conservative allies, she declared, “I want the book and the ideas of this book to be spread all over the country. When you read it, you'll see what an indictment of the New Deal it is.” (as cited in Schleier 310)

The Fountainhead was Rand's answer to the early 20th-century Progressives who brought about a socio-philosophical shift toward subjectivism which, as explained in detail in previous sections, Rand believed was the precursor to modern collectivist movements such as Marxism. She felt that subjectivism had led to a level of groupthink that threatened the individualistic nature of the American. Rand's viewpoint is described by her villain, Ellsworth Toohey, in *The Fountainhead*, “If we have ten people and each one of them chooses to believe only what the nine others believe – just exactly who establishes the belief, and how? Multiply it by millions, on a world scale, it's still the same...If a man is not the one to weigh, value and decide – who decides?” (*Journals* 86). Fully conscious of this contemporary predicament, Toohey, who has “an overwhelming desire to dominate” the passive masses, gladly steps up to act as the collective mind (*Journals* 103). In the real world, Rand felt that the position of Toohey was filled by collectivist leaders like Vladimir Lenin or the Pope. She contended that this mob mentality caused many people to relinquish their own abilities for deductive reasoning in exchange for the simpler and safer option of siding with popular opinion. In Rand's view, this surrender of all accountability to discern one's moral values initiated a mold of conscience that rotted down to one's core. In *The Fountainhead*, she communicated this idea primarily by personifying it in the form of the secondary antagonist, Peter Keating, and the malevolent maestro, Ellsworth Toohey. Keating is the meandering second-hander and Toohey the evil genius who acts as the puppeteer of the proletariat who are in search of someone to make their decisions for them. In Toohey's words, “I'm merely – well, shall we say? that mildest of all things, a conscience. Your

own conscience, conveniently personified in the body of another person and attending to your concern for the less fortunate of this world, thus leaving you free not to attend to” (*The Fountainhead* 255). The hero, Howard Roark, does not usually care to understand folks like Toohey or his former college roommate and rival architect, Keating, but toward the end of the novel, he finally figures out what makes them tick and he describes it thusly:

[I’ve been thinking about] The principle behind the dean who fired me from Stanton...The thing that is destroying the world...Actual selflessness...It does exist – though not in the way they imagine. It’s what I couldn’t understand about people for a long time. They have no self. They live within others. They live second-hand. Look at Peter Keating...He’s paying the price and wondering for what sin and telling himself that he’s been too selfish. In what act or thought of his has there ever been a self? What was his aim in life? Greatness – in other people’s eyes...He didn’t want to be great, but to be thought great...He knows himself to be dishonest, but others think he’s honest and he derives his self-respect from that, second-hand. (604-605)

Outwardly, Keating seems to be a much happier and much more successful man than the solemn and dour Roark. Over time, however, Keating cannot ignore what his conscience tells him, “While, at first glance, Peter Keating is cheerful, optimistic, the ‘life of the party,’ the true ‘good fellow’—he is [actually] a sad, desolate man, empty, desperate in his emptiness, without life, without joy, hope or aim, a bitter cynic hiding his cynical despair under a superficial, forced gaiety” (*Journals* 88). He recognizes at last that, though he has surpassed Roark in material possessions through his slick cronyism and brown nosing, he sees that Roark holds something priceless that he lost long ago, self respect:

Howard, I’m a parasite. I’ve been a parasite all my life. You designed my best projects at Stanton. You designed the first house I ever built. You designed the Cosmo-Slotnick Building. I have fed on you and on all the men like you who lived before we were born. The men who designed the Parthenon, the Gothic cathedrals, the first skyscrapers. If they hadn’t

existed, I wouldn't have known how to put stone on stone. In the whole of my life, I haven't added a new doorknob to what men have done before me. I have taken that which was not mine and given nothing in return. I had nothing to give. (575)

This theme struck a profound chord with Rand's readers because she fearlessly and explicitly declared through her fiction the thoughts that they may have been scared to openly express themselves.

At the time of *The Fountainhead's* publication in 1943, the American right, those who primarily tend to favor the conservation of American Individualism, were reeling after a series of landslide losses at the ballot box and a quickly transforming social contract. The Democrats, led by the Progressive champion, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had won control of the White House an unprecedented four straight times and they had been extremely successful in implementing their sweeping legislative agenda of public works projects and social security programs. These schemes forever changed the relationship between the individual American citizen and his or her government. Prior to the enactment of these programs, if someone was in need, it was the American tradition for family, friends, neighbors, churches, and, if all else failed, local governments, to take care of that person, but after the New Deal, the wellbeing of Americans now fell into the domain of the federal bureaucracy. Professor Max E. Fletcher describes this peaceful revolution in plain terms:

Even adults proved to be too ignorant and easygoing to follow their true self-interest. Before the 19th century ended, laws were deemed necessary, among other things, to prevent them from buying adulterated foods, to protect them from the market power of employers through legalization of unions, and, except in the United States, to protect them from their own short-sightedness through social security programs. (Fletcher 374)

As millions benefitted from these newly established public institutions, a considerable minority became increasingly irritated by the removal of volition from American charity in favor of mandatory taxes which quickly increased to support the newborn welfare state. Through her second-handers, Rand vilified and belittled the American left by

personifying their philosophy in characters that are caricatures ad absurdum, at once illuminating those frustrated American Individualists as to the philosophical underpinnings of Progressivism while also giving them dehumanized fictional versions of their political opponents at which they could laugh and mock. She does this in such an in-your-face fashion that the reader cannot help but react to it, just as folks rubberneck as they drive by a car accident, “Toohey, so grotesquely exaggerated that we cannot ignore him and his message.” (Black 58). This is the first prominent example of why Rand’s literature resonates so deeply, both positively and negatively, with the American people. Modern American Individualists posit that those in need can be cared for by the private goodness of the American people, and that the public welfare system is rife with corruption and abuse by moochers (second-handers). Though it may be a logically defensible position, it certainly does not sound “nice” and it does not exude the emotional empathy of the Progressive arguments, thus proponents of this stance find strength in Rand’s affirmation of their private beliefs. Furthermore, those who are helped by these programs or simply support them are offended by the way that Rand ridicules and disparages their beliefs by depicting them as weak and self-righteous. As a result of her fictional portrayals in *The Fountainhead*, she began her rise as the most prominent lightning rod of American politics, heralded on the right and derided on the left. In the words of Rand critic, Gene Bell-Villada, “Story and doctrine, moreover, are ably integrated, though of course what cultists revere is the latter” (235). To the clear literary advantage of *The Fountainhead*, Rand’s doctrine was still in the developmental stages at the time she wrote the novel while it had matured and hardened at the detriment of *Atlas Shrugged*. Her lack of philosophical clarity led her to lean on her expertise as a storyteller which she honed during her time working on films in Hollywood. The following passage from her journals shows how, though she thoroughly grasped her basic philosophical principles, she was still struggling to refine the countless intricate corollaries that her bases necessitated:

The old capitalism has nothing better to offer than the dreary, shop-worn, mildewed ideology of Christianity, outgrown by everyone, and long since past any practical usefulness it might have had, even for the capitalistic system. Furthermore, that same Christianity, with its denial of self and glorification of all men’s brotherhood, is the best possible

kindergarten of communism. Communism is at least consistent in its ideology. Capitalism is not; it preaches what communism actually wants to live. Consequently, if there are things in capitalism and democracy worth saving, a new faith is needed, a definite, positive set of new values and a new interpretation of life, which is more opposed, more irreconcilable, more fatal to communism than its bastard weak-sister — Christianity. (80)

The atheism and anti-communist sentiment would become trademarks of Rand's future philosophy, but her criticism of capitalism became the impetus for her to create a consistent ideology for its defense. As she worked to polish her ideas in her quest to devise "a new faith," she did what many religions had done before – appropriate the key aspects of the morality while metamorphosing the savior into a newly formed deity. In her attempt to convince the historically Christian nation to swap its religion for internalized, man-made rationale, she adopted and applied some of the principal tenets of the American Christian tradition like the belief in universal (aka: objective) truth and clear lines between good and evil. If part of Rand's theme involving the second-handers was to paint "Christianity as the hatred of all ideals," then she was obligated to present a proxy Jesus Christ (*Journals* 90). She did this in the form of Howard Roark.

Rand achieves her theme of the primacy of the individual through the projection of her ideal man. Her personal preoccupations with the perils of collectivism, especially the subjectivism of Marxism and the altruism of Christianity, may have motivated at the outset, but as her creative juices began to flow, she reconciled her literary product with her Romantic theory of art. With this in mind, she jotted down the following, "The ultimate theme of the book – Howard Roark as the remedy for all modern ills" (*Journals* 84). Roark was to show America the path to salvation. In constructing her modern redeemer, Rand did not endow him with superhuman powers, but instead chose to magnify the real human traits which she most valued: reason and work ethic. The augmentation of relatively quotidian attributes is emblematic of the American tall tale. Much of American history and its mythology were formed by braggadocios exaggerating the feats performed by real historical figures, and these tales were marked by "inflated incidents, characterizations, and hyperbolic language...miracle nucleus is

also present” (Loomis 113). Many times, the qualities for which a person was known became legendary due to the fish tales that enveloped them. For example, the tall tale of George Washington and the cherry tree made his signature honesty the stuff of legend, while the tale of Davy Crockett’s frank talk and common sense were played up in a multitude of stories to contrast rural wisdom with the “too intelligent for your own good” book-smarts of fancy DC politicians. After having been moved from the realm of history to that of mythology, these figures often make up the very cultural landscape of America, with billboards and tourist sites across the country advertizing their birthplaces or the locations of their heroic deeds. Because the tall tale has so keenly mythologized these figures, historians now have a hard time differentiating fact from fiction:

The characteristic motives of tall tales exist singly or are attached to the name of some hero, real or fictional. The recovery of most of the anecdotes of the major fictionalized heroes of the American scene has been the subject of a good deal of careful and serious effort in recent years, and the bibliographies of the Bunyans, Finks, Crocketts, Carsons, and their breed have grown extensively. (Loomis 111)

In effect, tall tales allow Americans to learn their history and shared moral heritage while also elevating real historical figures to legendary heights, giving themselves an aggrandized sense of collective pride. Rand inverted this American tradition in order to transpose this deep feeling of patriotism from the nation to the individual at a moral level.

Roark is cast as the everyman and yet he is the embodiment of American Individualist values and he is given the tall tale-esque abilities to maintain those principles even in times of great trial and tribulation. From the opening scenes of the novel, Roark is portrayed as a self-made man as he is expelled from school just before graduation and has to beg for a job as a draftsman for measly wages. He is the underdog from the start whose hard work and street smarts are pitted against his rival, Keating’s, schmoozing and nepotism. He is forced to work odd jobs in manual labor just to make ends meet, but Roark works tirelessly toward his goals for decades and finally comes out victorious. In the words of Dr. Yaron Brook, “It is the ultimate American novel. It

is a novel about American individualism...It's just Howard Roark alone, and it's his struggle to establish his life. It's about his independence and his individualism, and it's about the American success story." It is not only a story which is common in modern Americana – every American politician has a stump speech about a mother or grandfather or relative who started with nothing and toiled until he or she finally made it – it is the story of America itself. Americans like to fancy themselves as the greatest underdogs in history, just a paltry group of farmers armed with pitchforks and courage who took on the most powerful army in the world, that of the British, and not only won their independence from tyrannical rule, but also quickly grew to be the world's superpower. Rand appeals to these American sensibilities through the events in Roark's life depicted throughout the novel, but also tried to relate to the most readers possible by removing any trace of a biography before the start of the book. Roark has no family, no religion, no political affiliation, and no hometown. He is simply American. This achieves the dual goals of appealing to American readers as they project themselves onto him while also drawing the parallel again between Roark and Jesus Christ. Roark is not immaculately conceived as Jesus was, but his birth seems even more mysterious than the beginnings of the Christ child. Roark simply appears out of nowhere as a twenty-two year old man with only his years at the university as his back-story. The fact that he comes onto the scene already fully grown and morally flawless immediately otherizes him in the eyes of the reader and of the rest of the characters in the novel.

Because Roark enters the novel as a perfect specimen, *The Fountainhead* is a Bildungsroman flipped on its head, with the spiritual growth (or destruction) occurring in other minor characters in relationship to the gradual realization of Roark's greatness and his highest values. The hero himself is a static figure for whom there is no personal coming-of-age, "His complete selfishness is as natural to him as breathing. He did not acquire it. He did not come to it through any logical deductions. He was born with it" (*Journals* 93). Roark was brought into the world as such a faultless fellow that he has never even thought of trying to understand those who are not like him. He has been right all along and he knows it, "Roark is impervious to Keating's or the world's view of his expulsion. He does not even conceive of any 'comparative standard,' of any relation between his expulsion and Keating's success." (*Romantic Manifesto* 92). Because Roark completely lacks any desire to understand those around him, he does not

feel comfortable in most social situations such as dinner parties with clients of his. Likewise, Roark elicits a feeling of indefinable unease and disdain from those who do not comprehend his way of being. On the other hand, as is described by Dr. Gregory Johnson in the following passage, Roark also arouses in the minor protagonists a sense of respect bordering on reverence as they recognize his heroism:

The encounter with Roark, like the encounter with any other human being, is experienced first and foremost as a limitation. The other is precisely what is not the self. The other makes clear the limits of the self. This is particularly the case with Roark, who is experienced as more alien than most and therefore makes others particularly self-conscious. But by heightening the self-consciousness of the audience, Roark enables them to reflect upon their potentiality for freedom, which actually makes them freer. Thus a limiting condition is transformed into an enabling one. (168-169)

Therefore, through their interactions, both direct and indirect, with Roark and in large part due to a mixture of his strength and indifference, secondary characters are thrust into a deep state of self-contemplation that, in the cases of Keating, Dominique, and Wynand, lead to miserable hardships and moments of truth. As Dr. Stephen Cox puts it, “[Roark] must be enabled to live a morally ideal life, at least inwardly, and that this person must be tainted by no serious flaws, even if the policy results in wavering or improbable judgments and brusque manipulations of associated characters” (21). Due specifically to Roark’s “morally ideal life,” these “brusque manipulations of associated characters” are what carry the story forth. In a novel where the protagonist, the central object of the main theme and the projection of an ideal man, does not experience any inkling of emotional evolution, the plot must progress almost exclusively through action and conflict instead of lessons learned and primary character development. This tendency to move the plot forward through action instead of dialogue is a hallmark of Rand’s fiction and of her literary theory, “Since the theme of a novel is an idea about or pertaining to human existence, it is in terms of its effects on or expression in human actions that that idea has to be presented” (*Romantic Manifesto* 82). Rand’s “expression in human actions” as a means of plot progression in *The Fountainhead* comes in the

form of clashes between Roark and other characters. The most dynamic of these battles happen when minor protagonists, fallen heroes, challenge Roark and take him head on, “Throughout the novel, relations between the positive characters are full of tension and conflict, both in terms of the passions they elicit and in terms of the ways in which the friends and lovers act toward one another” (Hunt 83). This can be seen in Wynand’s initial assault on Roark. He tries to destroy Roark’s career but when he gets to know the hero personally, he realizes his own flaws and embarks upon a near suicidal venture to pay his penance and redeem himself. In the process, he falls madly in love with Dominique and marries her, leading to a precarious love triangle between the three main protagonists.

Philosopher and literary critic, Slavoj Žižek, explains the struggle, “The true conflict runs within the prime movers themselves: it resides in the (sexualized) tension between the prime mover, the being of pure drive, and his hysterical partner, the potential prime mover who remains caught in the deadly self-destructive dialectic” (“The Actuality of Rand” 221). By way of this spiritual and sexual combat with Roark, characters like Wynand and Dominique identify the fact that they have not lived up to their potential and seek to remedy their mistakes. Conversely, Roark is not capable of such a nuanced and intriguing journey, “One of the most important, and most troublesome, elements of Rand’s theory of literature is her insistence on morally idealized characters, thus Rand “evokes character through action” as Roark’s course is marked by the fruits of his labors, literally in terms of the size of the buildings he is able to construct (Cox 20). The book opens with Roark staring out across a quarry, raw materials for his yet unrealized projects. He slowly but scrappily progresses until he is able to build a small home and a gas station and gradually larger edifices until the final scene of the novel shows him gloriously atop the his greatest achievement, the tallest skyscraper in all of New York City. His morals and personality have not changed in the slightest, yet he has personally improved via his actions, his production. Though “troublesome” in the eyes of many literary critics, this technique has proved especially effective for Rand as a means of conveying and popularizing her ideas.

Rand’s stated goal of her writing, the projection of an ideal man, is in line with the leading theme of *The Fountainhead*, but other statements of hers which contradict

her declared objective may help explain why the novel has had such an inspirational and educational effect on so many readers. As was explained earlier in this section, Rand's journals prove that, at the time of her writing *The Fountainhead*, Objectivism was still in its infancy and she would spend the following decade refining her philosophy. Twenty-five years after the first publication of the novel, Rand wrote a forward to the silver anniversary edition. In this introduction, she made it clear and unequivocal that the goal of her writings was not the edification of her readers:

Was *The Fountainhead* written for the purpose of presenting my philosophy? Here, I shall quote from *The Goal of My Writing*, an address I gave at Lewis and Clark College, on October 1, 1963: 'This is the motive and purpose of my writing; *the projection of an ideal man*. The portrayal of a moral ideal, as my ultimate literary goal, as an end in itself – to which any didactic, intellectual or philosophical values contained in a novel are only the means.

'Let me stress this: my purpose is not the philosophical enlightenment of my readers...My purpose, first cause and prime mover is the portrayal of Howard Roark [or the heroes of *Atlas Shrugged*] as an end in himself...

'I write – and read – for the sake of the story...Is the pleasure of contemplating these characters an end in itself?' (vii)

Though she is unambiguous in this declaration, her journal entries, such as the ones quoted already in this section, point to ulterior motives, namely the opposition to collectivism and altruism and the transmission of a new individualist ethic in the form of Howard Roark. Furthermore, even the title of the novel makes one wonder if her statement a quarter century later is merely revisionist history. If the projection of Roark is an end in itself, then why call the book *The Fountainhead* and not simply *Howard Roark: Architect*? Clearly, the presentation of an ideal is meant to cause people to better themselves by striving toward that model. If not, then the book, or Roark for that matter, is a fountainhead for what? Is the reader supposed to enjoy the pure "pleasure of contemplating" his influence on the fictional world which he inhabits, or is it more

likely that even the title shows Rand's cards and divulges to all the fact that she wished the novel to be a fountainhead for a new American Individualist credo? Many of her other declarations, as well as the real world influence of her writings, point to the latter. For instance, a short journal entry shows that the real goals and themes of her fiction writings conflict with her later stated purposes, "The first purpose of the book is *a defense of egoism in its real meaning*, egoism as a new faith. Therefore – a new definition of egoism and its living example" (77). Then, in her *Romantic Manifesto*, Rand goes on to assert that, "*Art is the indispensable medium for the communication of a moral ideal*. Observe that every religion has a mythology – a dramatized concretization of its moral code embodied in the figures of men who are its ultimate product" (25). In these two brief sentences, she unwittingly admits her true goals while also tipping her hat to religions and mythologies as her literary forefathers. Rand was not alone in this sub-genre of semi-didactic, philosophical novels given that her French contemporary, Albert Camus delved into thick, substantive themes in his acclaimed works *The Stranger* and *The Plague*, but Camus did not claim that the communication of his ideas was not his intention. Furthermore, it is apparent that Rand's Romanticism has proved more effective, at least with American readers, in conveying her philosophy than the absurdism of Camus. Another passage from her *Romantic Manifesto* explains why the personification of her ideals in the form of Howard Roark works so well with her American audience:

[Though] the primary focus of art is metaphysical, not ethical...Many readers of *The Fountainhead* have told me that the character of Howard Roark helped them to make a decision when they faced a moral dilemma. They asked themselves: "What would Roark do in this situation?" – and, faster than their mind could identify the proper application of all the complex principles involved, the image of Roark gave them the answer. . . . Such is the psycho-epistemological function of a personified (concretized) human ideal. (22)

This more implicit, subconscious form of communication is a far cry from the labyrinthine compositions of thinkers such as Hegel and Kant, but it has impressively

spread her message to a much broader readership. In this way, the novel really was the fountainhead for her philosophy and her immense impact in the real world.

Rand composed *The Fountainhead's* two main themes in a way that was custom-made to resonate with the American people, and she skillfully devised a plot that enhanced characterization and achieve her ultimate goal of communicating her moral ideals through the projection of an ideal man. The book's themes were built to crystallize the contemporary concerns of an unheard minority while reanimating traditional American values in the form of Howard Roark. She further connected with the American people by constructing a hero akin to those of mythologized tall tales, a genre with which Americans are familiarized in their youth as a means of passing down patriotic, historical anecdotes in an exaggerated and entertaining fashion. And finally, she realized that she her philosophy was best conveyed through the personification of her principles in a human ideal, a technique which has proven to be extraordinarily effective.

Style, Imagery, and Dialogue

Rand's literature has often been dismissed out of hand as juvenile and simplistic, but a closer look shows that in *The Fountainhead* she writes in a unique way that deftly applies a modernist style, a selective use of dialogue, and a contrast of abstract with concrete imagery all meant to make a lasting impression on American readers. Because of her enormous sociopolitical impact and her divisive nature, most of the scholarship on Rand has concentrated on her philosophy while ignoring her literary talents, or lack thereof, a curious fact given that her fiction is what drives her philosophical popularity. Philosopher Peter Saint-Andre laments this reality, "Most explorations of Ayn Rand's fiction have focused on the ideological issues that figure so prominently in her novels... Unfortunately, that focus fails to do justice to the fact that Rand possessed 'the capacity of writing brilliantly, beautifully, bitterly' – as Lorine Pruette (1943) noted in her *New York Times* review of *The Fountainhead*" (as cited in Saint-Andre 407). This section examines Rand in depth as a literary figure in the context of *The Fountainhead* and

American Individualism, and provides much needed insight into additional aspects of her fiction which drive her work's success and influence.

Rand intertwines several writing forms into a peculiarly blended style which can be coined a philosophizing Pop-Modernist. In other words, she implements methods she learned as a screenwriter in Hollywood that are typical of the popular novel with the anti-establishment Modernism of her contemporaries in order to form a novel of ideas. One popular fiction technique she utilized was that which I have termed the "Boy Band Approach." For decades, boy bands such as the Backstreet Boys and One Direction have followed a similar formula, assembling groups of young men that almost always include a "bad boy," a "baby face," a "shy one," and a "heartthrob." The presentation of these archetypes is meant to appeal to the widest audience of young girls as possible. Before this successful recipe moved to the music scene, Ayn Rand took full advantage of it in her novels. *The Fountainhead* introduces the reader to numerous sub-heroes, each with his or her own distinct allure depending on the reader's personality. There is Dominique, the professionally independent and sexually fierce leading lady who needs no helping hand from her wealthy father and who marries and divorces two different men while also participating in a torrid love affair with the hero, Howard Roark. There is Mike, the blue collar, no nonsense tough guy. There is Steven Mallory, the tortured yet brilliant sculptor. Rand found that this "pick your favorite hero" technique was so effective in giving each reader a preferred protagonist in *The Fountainhead* that she reused it in her follow-up novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, as well. Due to her conspicuous use of methods like this, her style must be deemed, at least in part, popular fiction. Dr. Gene Bell-Villada classifies her this way, "*Fountainhead* in this regard qualifies as a competent middlebrow novel, neither better nor worse than dozens of such titles cranked out by commercial houses year after year. A suspenseful page-turner with a serviceable if not stunning prose style, it has able plotting (a skill Rand learned in Hollywood) and a highly charged eroticism" (235). Bell-Villada, however, goes on to acknowledge Rand's style is not solely popular fiction, but includes clear characteristics of Modernism, "The strictly economic side of Rand's thought, however, is not yet explicit. Her novel can still be read in the light of a certain twentieth-century Modernist sub-genre that tells of the free creative spirit in revolt against authority, censors, and booboisie – a pattern famously pioneered in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young*

Man” (234). One unmistakable example of Rand’s Modernism is the portrayal of Howard Roark who conceives and constructs Modernist buildings in the vein of Frank Lloyd Wright, “Rand believed that organizational conformity and group decision-making (synonymous in her mind with collectivism) forced architects to reproduce retrograde, conformist architectural idioms that were antithetical to modernism. The modernist Roark is expelled from the architectural academy for his refusal to design buildings with conventional historical referents” (Schleier 312-313). This rebellious Modernism coalesces with her pop-fiction techniques and weighty philosophical message to form a style that is uniquely Randian.

Rand produces imagery that enhances her philosophical message by vividly concretizing abstractions when speaking of her protagonists while leaving blurred reveries when describing her antagonists. This creates the effect of an objective reality surrounding her heroes while her second-handers wallow in a hazy subjective world. Though her journal entries at the time focused primarily on themes and characterization, there is evidence that she paid close attention to the minute details of her imagery. Professor Stephen Cox recounts her editing process on *We the Living*, the novel she published while writing *The Fountainhead*:

But the majority of Rand's hundreds of revisions are fastidious tinkering with sentence rhythms and images-changes that usually have little to do with her ideology or with her acquisition of the English language. About her imagery she is minutely conscientious: "dusk" becomes "semi-darkness," an official's "stamp" becomes a "rubber stamp," and "little bridges" become "delicate bridges." If this degree of concern is any indication, it seems clear that Rand devoted a huge proportion of her life as working novelist to problems of imagery. (Cox 26)

She goes through her imagery with a fine-tooth comb to magnify her major themes. For example, the novel opens and closes not only with a solitary Roark to signify the primacy of the individual, but also with Rand’s expert use of antithesis to capture the attention of the reader:

Howard Roark laughed. He stood naked at the edge of a cliff. The lake lay far below him. *A frozen explosion of granite burst in flight to the sky over motionless water.* (15)

[Dominique] saw him standing above her, on the top platform of the Wynand Building. He waved to her. The line of the ocean cut the sky. *The ocean mounted as the city descended.* She passed the pinnacles of bank buildings. She passed the crowns of courthouses. She rose above the spires of churches. Then there was only the ocean and the sky and the figure of Howard Roark. (694) [Emphasis added]

The momentary confusion of antithesis draws the reader in the same way that a comic temporarily makes the audience uncomfortable until the punch line releases tension and the crowd expresses its relief through laughter. One sees this technique throughout *The Fountainhead*, “Rand makes frequent use of antithesis by attributing to entities features that are the opposite of those we normally associate with them (stars are not far away but at the tip of one’s nose, frigid air is like scalding steam, snow sparkles like powdered fire).” (Saint-Andre 415). Beyond this sly literary device, Rand uses imagery to create a feeling of vague subjectivism around her antagonists while lending intense objectivism to her protagonists. As an illustration, Toohey is initially presented not as a concretized human being, but as an abstract phantasm one intuitively feels to be human:

[Of the] hundreds of powerful images in Rand's novels, images that are striking, compelling, yet fully responsive to her philosophic purposes...it is, therefore, as a shadow that Toohey first appears: He is a force that casts a giant shadow over *The Fountainhead*, yet he is a force that will be able to leave no deeper mark on Howard Roark than a shadow leaves on the surfaces it temporarily obscures. (Cox 25)

Though she offers up Toohey as a mere silhouette, the imagery she puts forward during Roark and Dominique’s first encounter is direct and lucid, “It is while thrusting his drill into the pure, obdurate granite that Roark first sees the heiress Dominique Francon, and

she him” (Schleier 317). The metaphor is painfully obvious. Roark, the man with the thrusting drill, is the only one capable of penetrating Dominique’s durable defenses. In concretizing these abstractions, Rand builds upon the philosophy that each character represents.

Rand’s selective uses dialogue to further improve on her philosophical characterizations while tapping into one of America’s most cherished values. The American people take pride in designating their country as a meritocracy (where each individual is judged by his or her own deeds) while some critics pejoratively regard the United States as a logocracy (all talk and no action). Rand translates this value to *The Fountainhead* to portray Roark as a virtuous hard worker while knocking Toohey as a vacuous blabbermouth. The term logocracy comes from a letter written by Mustapha Rub-a-Dub Keli Khan—a pseudonym used by Washington Irving and his collaborators in his satirical periodical *Salmagundi*-- describing the United States 1807:

Their government is a pure unadulterated logocracy, or *government of words*...Every man who has what is here called the *gift of gab*, the plentiful stock of verbosity, becomes a soldier outright, and is for ever in a militant state...In a logocracy thou well knowest there is little or no occasion for fire-arms, or any such destructive weapons. Every offensive or defensive measure is enforced by *wordy-battle* and *paper-war*; he who has the longest tongue, or readiest quill, is sure to gain the victory. (Keli Kahn 132)

Knowing that this trait has been frowned upon for centuries in American, Rand fashions an antagonist who is long-winded and oftentimes purposefully short on substance. Toohey likes to hear himself speak and he enjoys when others listen, and his one positive attribute is directly related to his verbal effusiveness, “He has a magnificent voice—a true achievement” (*Journals* 103). On the other hand, Roark is the epitome of meritocracy, both in how he handles himself and how he gains respect for others. Roark is serious and does not speak much but prefers to be judged on his actions, “Howard Roark is a stern, austere, gloomy man, who does not laugh readily, who does not crack jokes...he is [actually] the truly joyous man, full of a profound, exuberant joy of living,

an earnest, reverent joy, a living power, a healthy, unquenchable vitality” ... “And— ‘the noble soul has reverence for itself.’ One does not revere with a giggle” (*Journals* 88). It was Rand contention that, “A writer, like any other artist, must present an evaluative re-creation of reality, not merely assert his evaluations without any image of reality. In the field of characterization, one action is worth a thousand adjectives” (*Romantic Manifesto* 88). Rand ties Roark so closely to his action (his work), that even his name conjures up images of the materials with which he constructs his buildings and the location of his final triumph, “The name Roark is itself richly layered with Randian symbolism: it is a synthesis of the words roar and rock, while the full name Howard Roark evokes the name New York” (Schleier 315). Furthermore, I contend that it is no coincidence that the name Howard Roark sounds strikingly like “hard work,” since it is this that Rand holds as one of her hero’s central virtues. This is a value that Rand understood had defined American meritocracy since even before the nation was founded and that was esteemed even more in the aftermath of the Great Depression. Dr. Andrew Hoberek maintains that:

[To underestimate Rand’s connection with middle-class Americans in the 1940’s] would be to confine her influence to a few lonely fans (precisely our stereotype of Rand), and to ignore the similarities between her worldview and that of postwar white-collar workers more generally – not excluding those of us who work in the academy. Rand depicts a world in which people experience intensely passionate relationships with their work, and secondarily with the people who are valued, and in turn value others, on the basis of work. (46)

This value is not only depicted in Roark himself, but also in the profound respect between he and the minor hero, Mike. Mike is a blue-collar construction worker who is wary of Roark at first. His experiences with architects in the past has left him with the impression that they are all pompous and book smart, with no real knowledge of what it takes to erect a building from the ground up. Nevertheless, Roark’s hands-on approach and tireless work ethic proves Mike wrong and earns his respect. This close relationship concretizes and personifies the larger, more abstract ideal of a nation based on merit and not empty rhetoric. Rand simplifies this collective American value and frames it in

terms of the emotional response of two individuals, again evoking deeply held American principles through a fictional representation.

Rand's unique style along with her sophisticated use of imagery and selective dialogue further illustrate how she communicated her ideas through fiction and why *The Fountainhead* has struck such an enduring chord with the American people. Her mixture of gimmicky popular fiction devices with Modernist originality and substantive messaging make for a style of writing all her own called philosophizing Pop-Modernism. This approach, combined with her use of imagery, enhances characterization as a means of personifying her philosophy. And finally, Rand keenly touches on closely held American values and uses selective dialogue to disparage her antagonists by portraying them as part of a destructive logocracy while bolstering the integrity and virtuousness of her protagonists who embody the country's reverence for meritocracy. Rand's remarkable ability to identify the most precious American values and reproduce them in her fiction using these methods is one of the leading reasons for her popularity and practical impact.

American Optimism and Rand's Romantic Sense of Life

The aspect of Rand's fiction which builds the most intense connection with her readers is that of the parallels between her Romantic sense of life and Americans' ingrained optimism. Just as Rand's fiction is a dramatization of the world as it ought to be, the founding American document, the Declaration of Independence, was a proclamation not of mankind as it was with all its blemishes and imperfections, but of a brotherhood between all men as it could and should be. A far cry from its political offspring, the Constitution, which was forced to accept some of the grim realities of 18th century America, including the horrors of slavery and the exclusion of women from the franchise, the Declaration was a philosophical text that set forth a collective ideal toward which the nation has since strived. This hopeful and forward-looking pronouncement forever solidified that which had served the American people well since the days of pilgrims, an unceasing and unstoppable sense of optimism. This perpetual positivity manifested itself in literature and film in the form of the stereotypical

American happy ending. Unlike many of her celebrated contemporaries who wrote of glowering gloom and doom, and the unbearable suffering brought about by the modern condition, Rand put obstacles in the way of her hero for the sole purpose that they may be overcome. No matter how dark the night, there would always be a dawn in Rand's romanticized fiction. Given that she then tangles every facet of *The Fountainhead* with the traditions of American Individualism, the Romantic sense of life in her literature gives Americans patriotic reasons to believe that their country can overcome any adversity, and that the nation's best days still lie ahead.

As a matter of national identity, Americans have traditionally held a natural sense of optimism that has pushed them to continue to innovate during times of prosperity and has carried them forward during their darkest days. On an individual level, the possibility of upward economic mobility and an increased standard of living are taken as facts of life in the United States. Each generation assumes that it will be better off financially than that of its parents, and as a general rule this has been the case throughout much of the country's history. From the very start, Americans widely rejected the class designations and caste systems of the Old World:

We associate title with Europeans where status was often given by one's birth. Americans assume everyone is equal in status or at least ought to be given an equal opportunity to achieve status through hard work. Status is earned in the United States based upon what an individual does. The emphasis Americans place on individual achievement can be traced back to the Calvinist belief that each individual is equal in the eyes of God and can accomplish whatever is desired if he or she is willing to work hard. Success in the U.S. is the sweetest if it is individual success and based upon hard work and action. American heroes are always individualists who accomplish whatever they do in life through action...Daniel Boone, Davey Crockett, Paul Bunyan or Rambo. (Weaver 12)

On a social level, as detailed in the earlier section on the history of American Individualism, the idealistic goals set forth in the Declaration of Independence have been a guiding light for the country ever since Jefferson's pen touched parchment. This

relentless hopefulness accompanied by engrossed philosophical objectives has pushed Americans toward ever broadening social equality and civil rights. Even when faced with impossibly bleak situations, such as the Great Depression, Americans have historically refused to see themselves as victims and inherently believe that their fate is a positive one. This quote by John Steinbeck encapsulates the mentality of American optimism, “John Steinbeck once said that socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires. This helps explain why American culture is so hostile to the idea of limits” (Wright 124). According to the American way of thinking, if a poor man sees a wealthy man, he is not struck with class envy, but instead sees a future version of himself to which he aspires. On a national scale, if things are not currently going well, Americans are sure to believe that their fortunes will soon turn for the better.

Rand’s application of her Romantic sense of life in *The Fountainhead* captures the essence of American optimism and not so subtly suggests a philosophical solution for the country’s contemporary woes. As part of the antidote for the problems caused by second-handers, Rand jotted down the following tangential objective in writing *The Fountainhead*, “Positive values...enthusiasm for living...a definite goal, inspiration and ideal, a positive faith...The new faith is *Individualism*” (80). Individualism aside, the focus of Rand’s “new faith” is unequivocal optimism – a zest for life regardless of the intrinsic suffering of the quotidian sorrows. Her Romantic sense of life is not always easy to maintain, however, given the sometimes ugly facts of reality. Kirsti Minsaas demonstrates the difficulties that arise in Rand’s Romanticism by telling of how Erika Holzer, a Rand acolyte, shelved a “New York-based novel” she’d written because she “lost her love” for the city and could now only see its malevolence:

I [Minsaas] find this story absolutely fascinating, since it illustrates the author’s struggle to maintain a benevolent view of existence against the ugliness of a crime and corruption-infested social reality. One does not, however, have to be a Rand-influenced fiction-writer to experience this kind of sense-of-life conflict. Any person attracted to Rand’s Romantic vision of life will be vulnerable to the corrosive pressures exerted on this

vision by the harsh realities of the modern world. (“Ayn Rand as Literary Mentor” 108)

Just as Rand and her apprentices face this quarrel between the cruelty of truth and things as they ought to be, so too Americans struggle to keep their faith times of great crisis. Thus why the maintenance of an optimistic national mentality is of utmost importance, and Rand knew that, after the pain of the Great Depression and in the thralls of World War II, the fictional projection of her Romantic sense of life would help revive this positive American disposition. Throughout *The Fountainhead*, she allows Roark to fall into seemingly insurmountable predicaments. Just when the reader thinks that this may be the end of the line for the hero, in line with her Romanticism, he conveniently finds a way to redeem himself. Minsas now explains the function of Rand’s Romanticism, “Far from just holding up a neutral or ‘objective’ mirror to the world, an artist, Rand holds, presents reality in a highly selective manner, re-creating it according to his particular view of what constitutes its essential nature. As a result, Rand’s theory assumes a strong expressive dimension that infiltrates and to some degree even threatens to destabilize her mimetic base” (“Mimesis and Expression...” 19). The most transparent example of Rand’s Romanticism comes at the climax of the novel when Roark is put on trial for having blown up a housing project that he designed because adjustments had been made to the plans without his permission. The scene not only exemplifies her Romanticism, but is also her most blatant appeal to American sensibilities. As the trial winds down, Roark takes the stage to give his defense in the form of his famous speech. His statements unambiguously demonstrate that he is the embodiment of American Individualist values. Therefore, not only is he on trial, but so are those principles:

Now observe the results of a society built on the principle of individualism. This, our country. The noblest country in the history of men. The country of greatest achievement, greatest prosperity, greatest freedom. This country was not based on selfless service, sacrifice, renunciation or any precept of altruism. It was based on a man's right to the pursuit of happiness. His own happiness. Not anyone else's. A

private, personal, selfish motive. Look at the results. Look into your own conscience. (683)

This is his challenge to the jury – a metaphor for the American people – to decide if the tenets upon which the country was founded are still valid in this day and age. If so, then let him walk free. If they are not, then they accept the philosophy of the second-handers and should convict Roark for having lived out the values of American Individualism, “I recognize no obligations toward men except one: to respect their freedom and to take no part in a slave society. To my country, I wish to give the ten years which I will spend in jail if my country exists no longer. I will spend them in memory and in gratitude for what my country has been. It will be my act of loyalty, my refusal to live or work in what has taken its place” (684-685). Just as it seems that he is destined to wither away in cell for years, the jury comes back with a verdict of not guilty. This miraculously saves Roark from a dismal fate, but also confirms that there is still hope in the American people because they had not abandoned the founding principles which Rand felt made them great. Following the trial, the novel concludes with one last bit of Rand’s signature mix of Romanticism and Americana. As they look up at Roark’s most glorious achievement, the towering Wynand Building, Wynand snarkily quips to Roark that it is a good thing that he built it before humanity self-destructed. Roark responds, “Mankind will never destroy itself, Mr. Wynand. Nor should it think of itself as destroyed. Not so long as it does things such as this” (691-692). The Wynand Building is a clear reference to the Empire State building, the supreme technical achievement and symbol of American greatness and modernity at the time of the publication of *The Fountainhead*. Therefore this closing comment boldly declares that as long as America continues to embrace the values of American Individualism, all of mankind still has hope.

Rand’s audacious presentation of an ideal man in a fiction world as things ought to be according to her Romantic sense of life bonds perfectly with traditional American optimism. Rand’s Romanticism creates drama while still giving the American reader what he or she expects and desires, a happy ending. Not only does the audience get to see the hero walk away victorious, but they get the added satisfaction of the patriotic feeling that comes with the hyper-mythologized entanglement of American Individualist values as personified by Roark. Americans have reacted so strongly to this novel for

decades because they get to share in the hero's win as Rand invites them to project themselves upon him, thus giving them a greater stake in the story and a subconscious urge to adhere to the values that Roark represents.

CONCLUSIONS

Through a process of extensive research and analysis, this study has found that Ayn Rand employed literary techniques such as selective use of dialogue, all-American imagery, appeals to the American myth making tradition of the tall tale in the characterization of her hero, and an overall Romantic style to make *The Fountainhead* an effective artistic vehicle for the communication of her philosophical principles to the American people. Though she spent the final quarter century of her life expounding and expanding her philosophy of Objectivism by means of thousands of pages of non-fiction essays, speeches to crowds across the country, and numerous television interviews, the lasting impact of her work, both in terms of sales and in scope of influence, comes in the form of her novels, and the final section of this dissertation proposes a series of explanations for this curious fact. To fully demonstrate to the reader how and why *The Fountainhead* has become one of the purest examples of the practical application of fiction on a macro level, in chapters one through four, this study comprehensively contextualizes the novel and its author's cultural, literary, philosophical, and sociopolitical impact. Rand's complicated relationship with academia is examined, and the reasons for the recent boom in Rand related scholarship, led by *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, are explained. Given her broadening scope of influence that is covered at length in chapter two, an abundance of research related to Rand and *The Fountainhead* is sure to continue well into the future as intellectuals try to keep a measure of her constantly growing impact on politics and art in the twenty-first century. As Rand inspired Republicans continue to win prestigious places in the highest offices in the United States, her evolving position in the history of American Individualism and the modern American political dichotomy will necessitate further scholarship. Furthermore, as her public stature grows, more new readers are being exposed to Rand's writings than ever before, and being that the vast majority of the American youth favor politicians who propose a Progressive future for the country, it is yet to be seen how this generation of young Americans will react to Rand's philosophy and if the literary techniques which

have made *The Fountainhead* such an effective mechanism for the transmission of her ideals will continue to work. Whether she resonates with Millennials in the future or not, as is detailed in chapters two and three, her ubiquitous popularity amongst the leaders and voting base of the Republican Party, and the growing impact of Saul Alinsky on the Democrat side of the aisle, proves that she is sure make up half of the political dichotomy that will define twenty-first century America. Additionally, the results of this study show that because the prospect of a revived film version of *The Fountainhead* developed by one of the most success directors in Hollywood is not only possible, but probable in the near future, it is likely that *The Fountainhead* will surpass *Atlas Shrugged* as Rand's most popular novel, may become the impetus for further scholarly inquiry. As the Rand boom continues, it is safe to assume that scholars and artists alike will be inclined to go on dissecting the peculiar aspect of Rand's enormous influence at the center of this investigation, that of the successful, practical application of her fiction as a means of communicating philosophy.

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