



## CHECK YOUR PREMISES: AYN RAND THROUGH A BIBLICAL LENS BY DAVID S. KOTTER.

### **Foreword by Art Lindsley, Ph.D.**

*Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand has been ranked as second only to the Bible as one of the most influential books in the lives of modern readers, and more than 30 million copies of her books have been sold. Nearly a million dollars in cash prizes have been awarded in essay contests encouraging high school and college students to read Rand's novels, and increasingly universities are making her books required reading.

Aside from Rand's success, why would the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics (IFWE) show interest in reviewing the thoughts behind her works, given that she was a virulent atheist, despised Christianity along with the Bible, condemned any form of altruism, exalted selfishness, and used the dollar bill as her symbol?

First, even if you have no intention of reading Rand – and her works are certainly not for everyone – it is at least worth *knowing* what she believed and how her beliefs compare and contrast with the Bible.

Second, any work that appeals to so many people likely contains some truths worth investigating. For example, I have learned specific truths through reading atheist, New Age, and neo-pagan works, even though I reject their overarching worldview.

We at IFWE believe in *common grace*, which means that every favor of whatever kind that this undeserving world enjoys originates from the hand of God. While it is true that unbelievers eventually twist *truth*, they nonetheless have some *truth* to twist. In other words, non-believers have both honey – created truth – and hemlock – truth twisted by the Fall. To discern or sift the truth from the twist, the true from the false, the honey from the hemlock, we need to use the Bible as spectacles to view the world. As we do, we destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Third, because all truth is God's truth, we need to learn anything and everything we can, because each particular *truth* will lead us ultimately to God's truth. We need fear nothing from this endeavor. We certainly don't need to fear reading the works or examining the thoughts of an atheist. We have already suffered too much from ignorance. Our faith, after all, can stand up to the most rigorous examination.

David Kotter's study of Ayn Rand is a helpful analysis of the honey and hemlock in Rand's views. If we are going to be like the children of Issachar who understand our times (1 Chron. 12:32), it will be wise to know what is good and evil, true and false, about a leading influencer of modern thought.

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## Abstract

This study examines the four major novels of Ayn Rand along with secondary literature to evaluate her work through a biblical lens. It begins with a brief biography of her life, a summary of her significant contributions, and an overview of her philosophy Objectivism. The primary analysis of Rand's philosophy first finds a significant overlap between Ayn Rand's understanding of selfishness as the highest virtue with a biblical view of self-interest. Rand's disdain for altruism agrees with the Bible with respect to a capitalist economy but diverges in light of a biblical understanding of the family. Second, her anthropological categories (individualists vs. collectivists, and creators vs. second-handers) are both helpful and largely consistent with the Bible, though Ayn Rand's view of gender and sexuality deviates from a biblical understanding in disturbing ways. Third, while Ayn Rand's atheism is antithetical to the biblical worldview, there are remarkable areas of overlap, and her projection of an ideal man bears an uncanny resemblance to Jesus Christ.

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## Introduction

“Check your premises!” was a favored rejoinder of Ayn Rand during conversations and debates, and this imperative frequently preceded a withering barrage of logic aimed at the weakest points of her interlocutor. In this spirit, it is appropriate to review the premises evident in Ayn Rand's writing using a biblical lens for perspective.<sup>1</sup> Such an exercise is valuable because of the wide and ongoing influence of Ayn Rand.

Rand, a Russian-born American novelist, remains one of the most prominent business philosophers decades after her death in 1982. More than 30 million copies<sup>2</sup> of her novels *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Fountainhead*, *We the Living*, and *Anthem* have been sold. Her book sales tripled during the recent financial crisis, and Ayn Rand's influence continues to grow.<sup>3</sup> The Modern Library Reader's List of the 100 best novels includes all of Rand's titles in the top ten, with the 1,075 page masterwork *Atlas Shrugged* sitting at the top.<sup>4</sup> When researchers conducting a study for the Library of Congress asked readers, “What one book most influenced

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<sup>1</sup> “Using a biblical lens for perspective” in this paper means that the analysis will proceed based on the presupposition that the Bible is reliable and true in a way that is consistent with the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy. In other words, Ayn Rand's assertions and categories from her writings will be compared against the Bible as a standard. For example, Ayn Rand categorizes people as “producers, moochers, or looters” whereas the Bible divides people into different categories based on gender and salvation.

<sup>2</sup> Don Watkins reported that sales of *Atlas Shrugged* alone exceeded a million copies from 2008-2011. Don Watkins, “Happy Birthday, Ayn Rand -- Why Are You Still So Misunderstood?” *FoxNews.com*, February 2, 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/02/02/happy-birthday-ayn-rand-why-are-still-so-misunderstood/>.

<sup>3</sup> Anne Conover Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, Reprint. (New York: Anchor, 2010), xii.

<sup>4</sup> “Modern Library: 100 Best Novels”, n.d., <http://www.modernlibrary.com/top-100/100-best-novels/>.

your life?" *Atlas Shrugged* was second in influence only to the Bible.<sup>5</sup> More than 75 years after her first publication, every book published by Ayn Rand is still in print.<sup>6</sup>

These book sales are evidence that Rand's philosophy deeply resonates with many readers<sup>7</sup> and that millions agree with her vision of "man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute."<sup>8</sup> Specifically, her philosophical system, Objectivism, contends that collective altruism is evil and that the highest virtue of man is the capitalistic pursuit of rational self-interest.

Rand's philosophy is being taught to a new generation, and some of her books are mandatory reading at many high schools.<sup>9</sup> Further, her philosophy is being actively promoted by the Ayn Rand Institute through Objectivist programs at high schools<sup>10</sup> and colleges.<sup>11</sup> Her philosophy is especially influential in graduate business schools where earning a degree from a leading school is transformational, and even "forges a new identity as a permanent member of the business elite."<sup>12</sup> In the academy, scholars debate Objectivist philosophy and explicate Rand's life in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*.

After college, tens of thousands of Rand admirers network and share ideas (even date and fall in love) through an online organization called the "Atlasphere."<sup>13</sup> Prominent Rand proponents include House Budget Committee chair Paul Ryan, Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, former Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan, Nobel-Laureate Milton Friedman, *Wall Street Journal* editorialist Stephen Moore, even

<sup>5</sup> Esther B. Fein, "Book Notes - New York Times", November 20, 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/20/books/book-notes-059091.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Yaron Brook, "A Brief Biography of Ayn Rand," *The Ayn Rand Institute*, n.d., [http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about\\_ayn\\_rand\\_aynrand\\_biography](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_ayn_rand_aynrand_biography).

<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, Ayn Rand always understood that the success of *The Fountainhead* was made by the public. "It's not the public as an organized collective -- but by single, individual readers who discovered it of their own choice, who read it on their own initiative and recommended it on their own judgment." Ayn Rand, "To the Readers of The Fountainhead," in *Letters of Ayn Rand*, ed. Michael S. Berliner (New York: Plume, 1997), 673.

<sup>8</sup> Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Signet, 1992), 1070.

<sup>9</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 104.

<sup>10</sup> For example, the Ayn Rand Institute offers free copies of her books to teachers along with teacher's guides and lesson plans. More than 1.4 million copies of Ayn Rand's novels have been donated through this initiative. Almost a million dollars in cash prizes have been awarded through essay contests encouraging high school and college students to read Rand's books. Yaron Brook, "The Ayn Rand Institute: Overview," *Ayn Rand Institute*, n.d., [http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about\\_ari](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_ari).

<sup>11</sup> For example, The BB&T Charitable Foundation offers schools grants of as much as \$2 million to create a course on capitalism and to make *Atlas Shrugged* required reading. Seth Lubove and Oliver Staley, "Schools Find Ayn Rand Can't Be Shrugged as Donors Build Courses," *Bloomberg*, n.d., <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/print/2011-05-05/schools-find-ayn-rand-can-t-be-shrugged-as-donors-build-courses.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Mary van Valkenburg, "At Harvard Business School, Nitin Nohria Pushes Reforms on a Bankrupt Culture," *The Nation*, July 18, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> The Atlasphere's stated mission is to "help connect admirers of Ayn Rand's novels from around the globe to network both personally and professionally." Members of the Atlasphere agree that the novels of Ayn Rand "inspire us to become better human beings." "Ayn Rand - The Atlasphere: Ayn Rand News, Dating, and Social Networking", n.d., <http://www.theatlasphere.com/>.

baseball's "Iron Man" Cal Ripken.<sup>14</sup> In their 2011 book, Donald Luskin and Andrew Greta continue to call for heroic innovators who will become a "Rand hero" by taking (and meaning) John Galt's oath, "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, or ask another man to live for mine."<sup>15</sup>

Rand's writings express fundamental truths about the creation of wealth, although her understanding of the nature of human beings and God deviates significantly from the Bible. Her outspoken atheism and misguided anthropology inevitably lead to systematic and grievous errors. For this reason Marvin Olasky, editor-in-chief of *World Magazine*, rightly contends that Christians "should show what in Rand they agree with and what they spurn."<sup>16</sup>

The goal of this paper is to accept Olasky's challenge and carefully sift truth from error by viewing Rand's work from the perspective of a biblical lens. Specifically, this study will first contrast Ayn Rand's contention that selfishness is the highest virtue with a biblical understanding of selfishness and self-interest.<sup>17</sup> Second, this investigation will consider Ayn Rand's anthropology in light of biblical teaching on gender. Third, this examination will review her atheism from the perspective of a biblical Christology and note that Rand's conception of the ideal man has striking features in common with Jesus Christ.

In general, this biblical perspective will proceed with an evangelical presupposition that the Bible is inerrant in its original manuscripts and useful for teaching, correction, training in righteousness, and equipping people for every good work.<sup>18</sup> The end result should serve as an encouragement to see the exhilarating advantages of free-market capitalism while protecting Ayn Rand's readers from subtle, but devastating, errors inherent in the philosophy of Objectivism. Understanding the tenets of this philosophy will be easier with a concise overview of Ayn Rand's life.

## Overview of the Life of Ayn Rand

This section starts with a brief biography of Ayn Rand followed by a description of her key contributions. The following section will provide an overview of the Objectivist philosophy including an examination of Rand's stated goals for writing novels. For additional chronological

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<sup>14</sup> Hillary Clinton also admits to having a "Rand stage." Donald Luskin and Andrew Greta, *I Am John Galt: Today's Heroic Innovators Building the World and the Villainous Parasites Destroying It*, 1st ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2011). Milton Friedman admitted she "was a fascinating woman and had a great influence;" uncomfortable with her writings and cult-like followers, Friedman added that she was "an utterly intolerant and dogmatic person who did a great deal of good." Brian Doherty, "Best of Both Worlds - Reason Magazine," *Reason Magazine*, June 1995, <http://reason.com/archives/1995/06/01/best-of-both-worlds/3>. Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, xii.

<sup>15</sup> Luskin and Greta, *I Am John Galt*, 265.

<sup>16</sup> Marvin Olasky, "Take a Stand Against Rand," *WORLDmag.com*, July 16, 2011, <http://www.worldmag.com/articles/18283>.

<sup>17</sup> Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964).

<sup>18</sup> This position follows from 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and is consistent with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy formulated in October 1978. The statement can be accessed online at [http://www.churchcouncil.org/iccp\\_org/Documents\\_ICCP/English/01\\_Biblical\\_Inerrancy\\_A&D.pdf](http://www.churchcouncil.org/iccp_org/Documents_ICCP/English/01_Biblical_Inerrancy_A&D.pdf).

details, Appendix A contains two tables delineating by year the major events of her life and publishing career.

### Brief Biography

Ayn Rand was born Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum on February 2, 1905, in St. Petersburg, Russia.<sup>19</sup> Her parents, Anna and Zinovy, were wealthy Jews living in Russia's anti-Semitic capital city. Her father was a pharmaceutical chemist and owned a pharmacy with many employees.<sup>20</sup> As a twelve-year-old girl, Rand was in the store when armed Bolshevik soldiers commandeered the business during the Russian Revolution of 1917.<sup>21</sup> The family fled to the Crimean Peninsula but was plagued by food shortages and the proximity of the ravaging front in the ongoing civil war.<sup>22</sup> During this period she wrote in her journal, "Today I decided to be an atheist."<sup>23</sup> Thereafter she focused on the logic of Aristotle and was happy to be known as the "greatest champion of reason and the greatest enemy of religion."<sup>24</sup>

At age 21 she left her family to immigrate to the United States, first staying with relatives in Chicago, then moving to Hollywood.<sup>25</sup> She adopted the name "Ayn Rand" and began working for Cecil B. DeMille as a junior screenwriter. She met and married Frank O'Connor, who would be her husband for 50 years. Even so, her career remained her highest value, as she viewed love as only a supplement to individual creativity.<sup>26</sup>

Rand's first novel, *We the Living*, was published in 1936, and it provided autobiographical insights into her years under Soviet tyranny.<sup>27</sup> The anti-collective novelette *Anthem* was published in 1937 and is still required reading for high school students 75 years later.<sup>28</sup> Her first bestseller *The Fountainhead* was published in 1943 and earned her lasting fame as a champion of individualism.<sup>29</sup> In 1948, Gary Cooper played the lead character in the movie based on

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<sup>19</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, Reprint. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), 10.

<sup>21</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Paxton, *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 1998), 40; See also Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 10–11.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Britting, *Ayn Rand* (New York: Overlook Hardcover, 2004), 16.

<sup>24</sup> Burns, *Goddess of the Market*, 29.

<sup>25</sup> Paxton, *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 184; Paxton, *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life*, 83.

<sup>27</sup> In the foreword, Rand states this "is as near to an autobiography as I will ever write." The theme of this novel is "the individual against the state; the supreme value of a human life and the evil of the totalitarian state that claims the right to sacrifice it." Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand (50th Anniversary Edition)* (New York: Signet, 1963), 60; Brook, "A Brief Biography of Ayn Rand."

<sup>28</sup> The main point of *Anthem* is "the meaning of man's ego. It projects a society of the future, which has accepted total collectivism with all of its ultimate consequences: men have relapsed into primitive savagery and stagnation; the word 'I' has vanished from the human language, there are no singular pronouns, a man refers to himself as 'we' and to another man as 'they.' The story presents the gradual rediscovery of the word 'I' by a man of intransigent mind." Rand, *For the New Intellectual*, 64.

<sup>29</sup> The focus of *The Fountainhead* is "individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man's soul; the psychological motivations and the basic premises that produced the character of an individualist or a collectivist. The story presents the career of Howard Roark, an architect and innovator, who breaks with tradition, recognizes no authority but that of his own independent judgment, struggles for the integrity of his creative work against every form of social opposition -- and wins." *Ibid.*, 68.

Rand's screenplay from this book. These financial successes freed her to devote the rest of her life to writing and propagating Objectivist philosophy.<sup>30</sup>

In 1950 Rand met Nathaniel Branden, who was 25 years her junior. For many years they collaborated on refining Objectivist philosophy, publishing nonfiction books, and growing a teaching organization called the Nathaniel Branden Institute. As their friendship grew she declared him her "intellectual heir." In addition, they sought and received permission from their mutual spouses to pursue a sexual relationship similar to the heroines in her novels.<sup>31</sup> Coffee, cigarettes, and amphetamines<sup>32</sup> fueled her writing during this era, as well as frequent all-night conversations with a group of followers ironically called "the collective." Her greatest achievement and last work of fiction, *Atlas Shrugged*, was published in 1957.<sup>33</sup>

For the next 25 years Rand lectured and published nonfiction books and newsletters on Objectivism. She suffered from years of depression and was prone to abruptly and acrimoniously end relationships over intellectual disagreements and other misunderstandings. At the end of their affair in 1968, she disowned Nathaniel Branden and dissolved the Institute in less than a week. Ayn Rand suffered from lung cancer and was increasingly estranged from all of her living relatives. This estrangement continued to the extent that when she died in 1982, her few remaining friends erroneously reported to the newspapers that she had no family in America.<sup>34</sup>

### Key Contributions of Ayn Rand

Before continuing with an overview of the philosophy of objectivism, it is worthwhile to survey the positive contributions of Ayn Rand and summarize several reasons for reading her works charitably.

First, as a young girl she was an eyewitness to the Russian Revolution of 1917. In her teen years she personally knew young boys and girls who were sent off to die in Siberian prison camps.<sup>35</sup> Rand was purged from the university in her final year along with many others who had made anti-Soviet remarks.<sup>36</sup> Her first-hand knowledge of life under a totalitarian regime exposed the terror and agony of such an economic system at a critical time in the history of United States. This hard-won knowledge was shared publicly through her testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee and popularly through her novel *We the Living*. Her anti-

<sup>30</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 159.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Shaffer, *Great Philosophers Who Failed at Love* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 125; Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 253–258.

<sup>32</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 146.

<sup>33</sup> Introducing the iconic question, "Who is John Galt?", the theme of *Atlas Shrugged* was "the role of the mind in man's existence -- and, as a corollary, the demonstration of a new moral philosophy: the morality of rational self-interest. The story shows what happens to the world when the mind goes on strike -- when the men of creative ability from every profession, quit and disappear." Rand, *For the New Intellectual*, 88. Biographer Anne Heller describes the book as "a literary masterpiece, a philosophical detective story, and a prolonged tantrum against Neoplatonism, Christian brotherhood, and government regulation." Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 190.

<sup>34</sup> This was erroneous because the relatives who had first helped her immigrate were still alive in Chicago, but it illustrates the distance in these relationships. Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 61.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

collective position (evident in her novel *Anthem*) was a valuable countervailing voice against pro-Soviet sentiments of the 1950's and 60's in the United States.

Second, Ayn Rand lived with all her might. She emigrated alone to America with minimal English skills. Nevertheless, she tenaciously secured a job as a screenwriter and went on to become a famous novelist in her second language. As a productive screenplay reader in Hollywood, "she worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week, to earn as much as she could" and continued this practice through the completion of her final novel.<sup>37</sup> She often worked through the night, including one 30-hour stretch of productivity in the completion of *The Fountainhead*.<sup>38</sup>

Third, despite the deprecation of critics, readers for decades have appreciated the intricacies of Rand's plots, the symphonic pacing of her narratives, and the insights of the extended speeches in her books.<sup>39</sup> Millions of book buyers over the decades apparently disagreed with her literary critics, especially in light of the fact that her novels received sparse marketing support.<sup>40</sup> At the very least, she is to be commended for being a skilled author who produced engaging novels.

Fourth, Ayn Rand refreshes a sense of wonder in the minds of her readers and an amazement over the achievements of mankind. Rand lifts the eyes of readers to notice skyscrapers with renewed admiration, portraying each of them as the embodiment in steel and glass of the thoughts of a single great man.<sup>41</sup> To her, these buildings were "the will of man made visible," and New York City was "the greatest monument to the potency of man's mind in human history."<sup>42</sup> Similarly, she was deeply moved by the opportunity to observe the launch of a Saturn V rocket during the Apollo space program. This admiration conveyed in her writing gives readers a greater appreciation for the monumental tasks which are managed daily by thoughtful industrialists, such as running a trans-national railroad network or unlocking petroleum from shale rock.

Fifth, Rand has a joyous sense of life and notes the beauty of nature in the world. She shows the abundance of the earth for providing wood, ore, and other useful materials for creators to utilize. She notes the inherent beauty of trees, lakes, and rivers. The heightened senses of her novels draw attention to often-overlooked natural beauty.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 142, 176.

<sup>38</sup> Rand, "To the Readers of *The Fountainhead*," 672. This amphetamine-fueled intensity was also maintained for extended periods of time, such as a 33-day stretch when she never left the apartment while finishing *Atlas Shrugged*. Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 146, 261.

<sup>39</sup> Mimi Reisel Gladstein, *The New Ayn Rand Companion, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1999), 117.

<sup>40</sup> The sales patterns of her novels often surprised Rand's publishers. Consistent with word of mouth referrals, sales were steady year after year with little ongoing marketing support. Ayn Rand always understood that the success of her novels was accomplished by individuals. "It's not the public as an organized collective -- but by single, individual readers who discovered it of their own choice, who read it on their own initiative and recommended it on their own judgment." Rand, "To the Readers of *The Fountainhead*," 673.

<sup>41</sup> As an immigrant, Rand was deeply moved by her first view of the Manhattan skyline where the skyscrapers represented "an astonishing display of American inventiveness, energy, economic aspiration, and engineering talent." Ibid., 53.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 79.

Sixth, Rand's insights into human nature as part of an economic system are extremely helpful. Her categories of "producers" versus "looters" and "moochers" capture enduring elements of many economies of the world. Rand correctly and precisely understood the inherent advantages of free trade for producing wealth compared to the stagnation of welfare states. To the extent that she inspires people to become producers, everyone in society benefits.

Seven, in projecting the effects of philosophical convictions to their natural conclusion, Rand exposes errors in the thinking of many people and governments. She demonstrated uncanny insight and courage in deconstructing liberal American economic and political assumptions.<sup>43</sup> She understood that totalitarianism was both immoral and impractical because "the independent motivation indispensable to economic and social progress cannot survive in an atmosphere of intimidation, coercion, and lack of individually earned rewards."<sup>44</sup> Though she did not live to celebrate the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of Communism, she saw in advance the inevitability of these events.

Eighth, for a woman who championed the dollar sign as a magnificent symbol<sup>45</sup> and earned as much in a week from royalties as most people earned in a year,<sup>46</sup> Ayn Rand was financially prudent and was generally untouched by personal greed for luxuries.<sup>47</sup> She primarily enjoyed the process of earning and always negotiated for fair prices (often very high) for her intellectual work but was not extravagant in her personal lifestyle.<sup>48</sup> She viewed money as a tool that freed her to pursue the work of her choice and to hire a cook, a maid, and a handyman.<sup>49</sup>

Ninth, even her greatest critics must agree that she lived to the best of her ability to be the embodiment of Objectivist philosophy. Ayn Rand was right most of the time about some of the most important things, and for that we can be grateful for her life and contribution through writing. Her ideas were successful to the extent that they were consistent with a biblical worldview, yet deviated in key areas of anthropology and Christology. In other words, she was betrayed by errors in her premises and as a result suffered greatly in her life, marriage, and other relationships. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to turn in the next section to an overview of her philosophy along with some preliminary observations through a biblical lens.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>45</sup> For example, Ayn Rand was frequently photographed wearing a dollar sign pin on her dress; a topiary in the form of a dollar sign was displayed next to the open casket at her funeral; and in what one presumes was her ideal world, a dollar sign of solid gold was prominently displayed for all to see in the idyllic Galt's gulch of *Atlas Shrugged*.

<sup>46</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 95, 287.

<sup>47</sup> Later in life she began to wear "expensive, elaborately tailored suits and gowns" but even so remained "largely without conventional vanity." Ibid., 98, 175.

<sup>48</sup> Even so, it must be admitted that she celebrated the success of some of her novels with a new mink coat. Ayn Rand and her husband lived in an apartment in New York City for decades after selling their ranch and architectural-showpiece home in California. Ibid., 159, 168, 208.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 159.

## Overview of the Philosophy of Ayn Rand

“Miss Rand, could you give the essence of your philosophy while standing on one foot?”<sup>50</sup> was the question posed at a 1957 sales conference for the publisher Random House. Her concise response from one foot was illuminating: “Metaphysics: objective reality. Epistemology: reason. Ethics: self-interest. Politics: capitalism.”<sup>51</sup> Rand’s ideal world would be populated by people holding these convictions as part of a full philosophical system guiding the course of life. Each conviction is worth briefly examining in the subsequent sections, followed by a summary of her stated goals and intentions for publishing her novels.

## Metaphysics: Objective Reality

In holding to metaphysical independent reality, Ayn Rand understood reality as existing as an objective absolute. Her writings are punctuated with such statements as “A is A,” “Nature must be obeyed,” and “Facts are facts, independent of man’s feelings, wishes, hopes or fears.” From this perspective, the task of man’s consciousness is “to *perceive* reality, *not* to create or invent it.”<sup>52</sup> This stands opposed to relativism or any attempt by individuals to create their own reality.

Objectivism unnecessarily extends this position to reject any belief in the supernatural or “mystical.” Otherwise it is fundamentally consistent with a biblical understanding that God has formed an objective universe independent of the perception of observers. From its first page the Bible clearly states, “God created the heavens and the earth” by overcoming darkness and shaping a world that began “without form and void” (Genesis 1:1, 2). Further, there is no place to hide from the Lord who asks the questions, “Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away?” and “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” Since God the Creator is everywhere and aware of everything, the stability of objective reality is assured.

Epistemology: Reason

Ayn Rand contended that reason is the conceptual human faculty which “identifies and integrates the material received by man’s senses.”<sup>53</sup> She argued that man is competent to know reality and rejected any skepticism which held that objective reality cannot be known by any individual.<sup>54</sup> Rand also vociferously opposed all religions as “mysticism” for accepting faith, feeling, or revelation as a means of knowledge. She defines mysticism as “the acceptance of

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<sup>50</sup> The question was lightly paraphrased from an account of Rabbi Hillel, who was challenged to summarize the whole Torah while standing on one foot. *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>51</sup> Yaron Brook, “The Ayn Rand Institute: Essentials of Objectivism,” *Ayn Rand Center for Individual Rights*, n.d., [http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism\\_essentials](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_essentials).

<sup>52</sup> Italics are original. *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Ayn Rand, “The Objectivist Ethics,” in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964), 22.

<sup>54</sup> John Galt, the protagonist of *Atlas Shrugged*, defines reason thus: “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.” Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 930.

allegations without evidence or proof, either apart from or against the evidence of one's senses and one's reason."<sup>55</sup>

Rand's high estimation agrees with a biblical perspective regarding the faculty of human reason, especially the abstract reasoning which leads to philosophical and ethical contemplation. Indeed, this is one of the aspects which sets human beings apart from all other living things in creation (Genesis 1:26-28). Martin Luther articulated this idea in his famous defense such that he could only be dissuaded from his ideas by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason. On the other hand, the Bible recognizes that human reason has been marred by sin and is no longer an infallible guide to perceiving the objective world. Further, the Bible contends that in specific cases, revelation directly from God is a valid means for human beings to acquire knowledge about themselves and the world. The Bible itself is the most important collection of such revelation.

The areas of overlap between Ayn Rand and the Bible are significant with respect to objective reality and reason.<sup>56</sup> This overlap is also present in the most productive societies on earth, and these societies have done the most to advance human prosperity and flourishing. This similarity continues with the consideration of ethics and, by extension, capitalism.

### **Ethics: Self-Interest**

Ayn Rand used the terms "selfishness" and "self-interest" both proudly and interchangeably in her writing.<sup>57</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the term "selfishness" will be associated with Objectivism, and the term "self-interest" will be reserved for a biblical perspective which might be understood as being closer to the view of the father of economics, Adam Smith.

With this separation in mind, Ayn Rand understands selfishness to be a great virtue. She argues that every man must live for his own sake and for his rational self-interest: "the achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose."<sup>58</sup> This view has remarkable similarities with a biblical perspective of self-interest and the pursuit of happiness, and the distinctions will be examined as part of the primary focus of this paper starting after the next section on the Objectivist view of capitalism.

### **Politics: Capitalism**

Objectivist thought holds to the basic social principle that men must live together as "traders" who give value for value by free, mutual consent toward mutual benefit.<sup>59</sup> This contrasts sharply with most societies where "producers" create value and wealth while "looters" live by taking and

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<sup>55</sup> Ayn Rand, "Faith and Force: The Destroyers of the Modern World," in *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: Signet Books, 1984), 62.

<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, one of Rand's characters states, "Contradictions do not exist. Whenever you think you are facing a contradiction, check your premises. You will find that one of them is wrong." Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 188.

<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Ayn Rand declared, "I decided to become a writer -- not in order to save the world, nor to serve my fellow men -- but for the simple, personal, selfish, egotistical happiness of creating the kind of men and events I could like, respect and admire." Rand, "To the Readers of The Fountainhead," 669.

<sup>58</sup> Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 30.

<sup>59</sup> Ayn Rand and Leonard Peikoff, *Anthem* (New York: Penguin, 1995).

destroying. For this reason Ayn Rand argues that no person or group has the right to initiate the use of physical force against others, but only in self-defense against those who might initiate violence.<sup>60</sup> Since communism and socialism require coercion, the only social system that bars physical force from human relationships is *laissez-faire* capitalism.<sup>61</sup> Ayn Rand contends that the free exchange of money has been the only nonviolent, orderly, and socially transparent means of calibrating the value men placed upon one another's work. In other words, without money for exchange -- force decides.<sup>62</sup>

Thus Objectivism stands opposed to collectivism in all its forms, especially fascism, socialism, or any other government redistribution of wealth.<sup>63</sup> In Rand's world, the only function of the government is to protect the rights of individuals from those who initiate the use of physical force, whether domestic criminals or foreign invaders.

Once again, this overlaps significantly with a biblical perspective. One of the key biblical roles of government is to function as an agent of God, approving of those who do good and carrying out the wrath of God on the wrongdoer, even using compulsion or lethal force (Romans 13:1-7). Further, the concept of individual property rights is affirmed in Exodus 20:15 where stealing is prohibited; in Exodus 20:17, even coveting the property of another person is forbidden.<sup>64</sup> The inviolability of real estate is also upheld by prohibitions against moving boundary markers.<sup>65</sup> This principle is so important that even the personal property of an enemy should be returned.<sup>66</sup>

Also, the Bible is clear that men were created for work even before sin entered the world.<sup>67</sup> In Scripture laziness is castigated, and the sluggard is excoriated.<sup>68</sup> Instead, Christians are enjoined to work heartily in the workplace as for the Lord and not for men (Colossians 3:23).<sup>69</sup> Ayn Rand would enthusiastically agree with the biblical injunction against idleness and mandate for able people to "work quietly and to earn their own living" (2 Thessalonians 3:12). This biblical even extends to the command that any able person who refuses to work should be refused any charity, even food (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Finally, the Bible commends trading between people for mutual benefit and earning a profit from honest work. In a Rand-like turn of phrase, Proverbs states, "In all toil there is profit, but mere

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<sup>60</sup> Ayn Rand et al., *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: Penguin, 1967).

<sup>61</sup> Brook, "Essentials of Objectivism," n.d.,

[http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism\\_essentials](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_essentials).

<sup>62</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 159.

<sup>63</sup> Ayn Rand once asked a New York audience to "imagine being ruled by a group of men who have not been elected and cannot be recalled, who control all public information, who distribute all food, housing, employment. They cannot be criticized; they dispatch political adversaries to dungeons or death without a trial or hearing. They claim that individual rights do not exist." *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>64</sup> See also Deuteronomy 5:21.

<sup>65</sup> For example, "Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless." (Pro 23:10). See also Deuteronomy 19:14; Job 24:2; Proverbs 22:28; Hosea 5:10.

<sup>66</sup> "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him" (Exodus 23:4).

<sup>67</sup> The Lord specifically put the man in the Garden of Eden "to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15) and all of creation was not completed until there was a "man to work the ground" (Genesis 2:5).

<sup>68</sup> See Titus 1:12; Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16.

<sup>69</sup> This is in addition to commands for believers to work on spiritual growth and personal sanctification, such as Philippians 2:12.

talk tends only to poverty” (Proverbs 14:23). Similarly, Proverbs presents a woman of virtue with the description, “She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night” (Proverbs 31:18). Like an industrious capitalist, “She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard” (Proverbs 31:16). Without condemning earning a profit, Jesus points to a greater truth with his question, “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” (Luke 9:25; see also Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36).

With this brief overview of Objectivism in mind, the next section will turn to Ayn Rand’s goals for writing. Following this extended examination will be a section comparing her understanding of selfishness with self-interest through a biblical lens. This will show that there is extensive overlap between Rand’s selfishness and biblical self-interest in the public sphere and capitalist economics. On the other hand, these understandings diverge significantly in relationships within families and with respect to God.

### Stated Goals of Ayn Rand

To put together these key elements of Objectivism, it is helpful to better understand Rand’s intended goals for promulgating her philosophy. Fortunately, she was forthcoming about her purposes both in the forewords to her novels and in her published essay “The Goal of My Writing.”<sup>70</sup> She wrote to change the perceptions of the world about the greatness of man, the virtue of individualism against collectivism, and the morality of capitalism to foster great men. In addition, her selfish enjoyment and personal fame were strong motivators in her writing.

First, in thinking about how her novels were intended to change perceptions, it is important to remember that she grew up under the Russian governmental domination of news and information. In this climate novels and poems became surrogates for banned political speech, and Rand realized that “political and philosophical ideas, especially those that are heroically clothed and set in large-scale social novels, have the power to shape perceptions and change the world.”<sup>71</sup>

Second, she was clear about her intent as a novelist: the projection of an ideal man.<sup>72</sup> Her writing was dedicated to the “exaltation of man’s self-esteem and the sacredness of his happiness on earth.”<sup>73</sup> Ayn Rand wanted to redirect the highest level of man’s emotions away

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<sup>70</sup> Ayn Rand, “The Goal of My Writing,” in *The Romantic Manifesto, Revised Edition*, Second Revised ed. (New York: New American Library, 1975), 161–85.

<sup>71</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 31.

<sup>72</sup> Rand, “The Goal of My Writing,” 451.

<sup>73</sup> Rand was influenced in writing *The Fountainhead* by Friedrich Nietzsche and especially his quote from *Beyond Good and Evil*, “The noble soul has reverence for itself.” This influence and ideas for future research are explored in greater detail in Appendix B. Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition* (New York: Signet, 1996), x.

from the “murk of mysticism” back toward its proper object: man.<sup>74</sup> She characterizes the sense of life, dramatized in *The Fountainhead*, as nothing less than “man-worship.”<sup>75</sup>

Toward this end Ayn Rand saw her most important job as the formulation of “a rational morality of and for man, of and for his life, of and for this earth.”<sup>76</sup> She said, “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 the novel are only the means.”<sup>77</sup> Rand contends that man’s character is the product of his premises. In other words, an ideal man has a free will with a reasoning mind, and it is up to his individual choice whether he will be good or evil.<sup>78</sup> Such an ideal man does not depend on others. In addition, Rand also wanted to show how desperately the world needs prime-mover men like this and also how viciously the world treats such noble men.<sup>79</sup> For this reason her novels define and present the conditions of *laissez-faire* capitalism which make such ideal man possible -- namely, a free, productive, rational system which demands and rewards the best in every man.<sup>80</sup>

Third, Ayn Rand derived personal enjoyment from writing about such characters and themes. She saw as part of her life purpose “the creation of the kind of world (people and events) that I like -- that is, that represents human perfection.”<sup>81</sup> In an autobiographical sketch in 1936, Rand said, “If a life can have a theme song, and I believe every worthwhile one has, mine is a religion, an obsession, or a mania or all of these expressed in one word: individualism.”<sup>82</sup> However, the basic issue in all of her writing was not primarily individualism versus collectivism, but rather reason versus mysticism. Ayn Rand saw this as the “conflict between objective thinking on the one hand and irrational subservience to a deity, a tyrant, or a group of people on the other.”<sup>83</sup>

Finally, beyond influencing perceptions and changing the world, Ayn Rand had a stated intention to be personally famous by the time that she was 30 years old.<sup>84</sup> One illustrative incident occurred in the midst of a two-week journey by boxcar from the Crimea back to St. Petersburg during the Russian Revolution. When the train stopped briefly in the enormous capital city of Moscow, Rand realized that this was only one city among hundreds or even

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>75</sup> Ayn Rand states, “The man-worshippers, in my sense of the term, are those who see man’s highest potential and strive to actualize it. The man-haters are those who regard man as a helpless, depraved, contemptible creature -- and struggle never to let him discover otherwise.” Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ayn Rand notes, “No wonder the advocates of religion are so insistent that ‘there can be no morality without religion.’ They seem to know their danger point. There’s my main job.” Ayn Rand and Leonard Peikoff, *The Journals of Ayn Rand*, ed. David Harriman, Reprint (Plume, 1999), 610.

<sup>77</sup> Rand, “The Goal of My Writing,” 162.

<sup>78</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>80</sup> Ayn Rand describes the ideal man Howard Roark as follows: “The noble soul par excellence. The man as man should be. The self-sufficient, self-confident, the end of ends, the reason unto himself, the joy of living personified. Above all--the man who lives for himself, as living for oneself should be understood. And who triumphs completely. A man who is what he should be.” In contrast, she describes Dominique Wynand as “The woman for a man like Howard Roark. The perfect priestess.” Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition* (New York: Signet, 1996), 696.

<sup>81</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 36.

thousands in the world. She knew she had something to say to people in all of them and was thrilled to realize that the audience for her plays and stories would be immense.<sup>85</sup>

Understanding the goals of Ayn Rand are important for this study because she was not necessarily writing for the entertainment of her audience or for personal riches, but rather to change the world and focus readers on the worship of man. Indeed, her writings continue to have significant success toward achieving these objectives. For this reason, it is important to assess whether these goals are valid and specifically, whether the foundational premises are correct. Errors in Ayn Rand's premises lead to faulty perceptions of the world and problems in the lives of people and society as a whole. For this reason, the major portion of this paper beginning in the next section will analyze Ayn Rand's premises from the perspective of biblical truth.

## **Ayn Rand's Philosophy Through a Biblical Lens**

The heart of this analysis will proceed in this section with a biblical examination of Ayn Rand's understanding using three contrasting pairs: selfishness and altruism, anthropology and gender, and atheism and Christology. This extended analysis will be followed by an evaluation of Rand's individual character and personal relationships based on her invitation to consider her own life as the exemplar of Objectivist philosophy.<sup>86</sup> While such an assessment of a founder's personal life may not always be warranted in evaluating a philosophy, Ayn Rand considered herself to be the epitome of Objectivist philosophy just as Jesus Christ perfectly represented biblical ideals.<sup>87</sup>

### **Ayn Rand's Philosophy: Selfishness and Altruism**

Ayn Rand's definitions of selfishness and altruism are specifically delineated in the book *The Virtue of Selfishness* and illustrated in the novel *Atlas Shrugged*.<sup>88</sup> Since these definitions can be jarring to the first-time reader, this section will seek to use several extended quotes from these books in an attempt to represent her categories accurately and charitably. In addition, the following diagram of the span of personal relationships will be used to compare the functional views of Ayn Rand, the Bible, and the federal government. This diagram illustrates how each position differs with respect to altruism, selfishness, God's existence, and voluntary trade for mutual benefit.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>86</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 1070.

<sup>87</sup> See especially John 14:9-11 and Colossians 2:9.

<sup>88</sup> Heller describes *Atlas Shrugged* as an eleven-hundred-page deconstruction of the Marxian proposition "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 193.

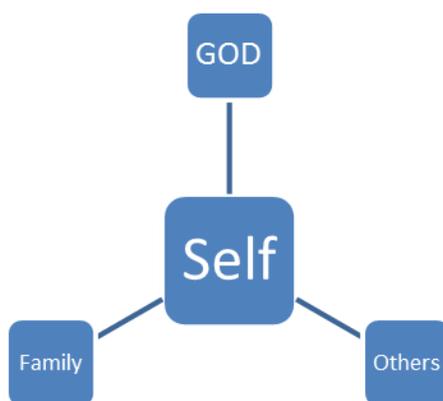


Figure 1: Possibilities for Personal Relationships

### Selfishness Defined

Rand admits that her understanding of selfishness is not “what is meant conventionally.”<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, she believes that the Objectivist ethics uses the concept of selfishness “in its exact and purest sense.”<sup>90</sup> On the first page of *The Virtue of Selfishness*, Rand objects to the popular understanding that “selfishness” is a synonym of evil.<sup>91</sup> In sharp contrast to selfishness, she contends that altruism is the real evil which has “brought the world to its present state and which represents the morality of death.”<sup>92</sup>

The first component of pure selfishness is that it is rational. For this reason, selfishness is not a license to be a “murderous brute who tramples over piles of corpses to achieve his own ends, who cares for no living being and pursues nothing but the gratification of the mindless whims of any immediate moment.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, Ayn Rand would not believe that any action is good simply because it is intended for one’s own benefit.<sup>94</sup> Further, selfishness is not to be motivated by “irrational emotions, feelings, urges, wishes or whims.”<sup>95</sup>

The second component of pure selfishness is that “concern with his own interests is the essence of a moral existence, and that man must be the beneficiary of his own moral actions.”<sup>96</sup> Ayn Rand’s rationale begins with the fact that a man exists. If he exists, then he must be consciously aware of that fact. If a plant is alive, it seeks sunlight to sustain its life. Likewise, if an animal is alive, it seeks food to preserve its life.<sup>97</sup> Rand contends that since a man exists with neither chlorophyll nor claws, he must use his brain to think rationally to survive. He must be

<sup>89</sup> Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, ix.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>93</sup> This statement is not necessarily hyperbole. Rather this quotation needs to be read in light of Ayn Rand’s first-hand experience with a totalitarian government under which millions were murdered. *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

productive or else he will no longer live, just as a plant with defective leaves or an animal unable to hunt will not survive.

It follows that a man's own life is the standard of value by which one judges what is good or evil based on "that which is required for man's survival *qua* man." In the same way man's life is "the *standard of value* -- and *his own life* as the ethical *purpose* of every individual man."<sup>98</sup> If a man is coerced by guilt or a government<sup>99</sup> to give from his productive efforts in the name of altruism, then he is essentially giving away a portion of his life or part of his ability to survive.<sup>100</sup> Pushed to the extreme, altruism will cause an individual to cease to exist simply so that others might benefit.

To convey the point, it is illustrative to consider the opposite of selfishness. Marcella Bannert, an energetic and ambitious executive assistant in Hollywood, was pivotal in crystallizing Ayn Rand's views by embodying the antithesis of selfishness.<sup>101</sup> Rand asked Bannert what she wanted to achieve in life, and was stunned by her response:

If nobody had an automobile, she would not want an automobile. If some people had an automobile and others didn't, she would want an automobile. If some people had two and others had only one or none, she would want two automobiles, and so on. And she would want people to know that she had more than they did.<sup>102</sup>

Ayn Rand was shocked to realize that Bannert seemed in essence "not to want anything for herself," had "no values except those derived from other people," "and prized what they prized and wanted more of whatever they had."<sup>103</sup> Such a person in Rand's eyes was "self-less" and had "no authentic self with which to desire or create anything that was hers alone."<sup>104</sup> This insightful observation actually explained for Rand why so many people mindlessly conform to apparently meaningless conventions.

As a result, Rand's basic social principle is that "every living human being is an end in himself, not the means to the end of the welfare of others -- and, therefore, that man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself."<sup>105</sup> For this reason, living for one's own sake means that "the achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose."<sup>106</sup> This principle is epitomized by the oath of John Galt at the end of his

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 27. Italics original.

<sup>99</sup> Heller notes that *Atlas Shrugged* critiques "the bureaucratization of the altruistic impulse, and the transformation of America from a culture of self-reliance to one of entitlement." Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 194.

<sup>100</sup> Ayn Rand held a disgusted contempt for Communist ideology summarized in the slogan "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." Her disgust grew as "need" was increasingly revealed to be a euphemism for the demands of those in power. Ibid., 40.

<sup>101</sup> Marcella Bannert apparently was the foundation for the character of Peter Keating in *The Fountainhead*. In the same way, Rand understood that her sister Nora seemed to intentionally live in a way that made others jealous.

<sup>102</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 109.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, 30.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

climactic speech in *Atlas Shrugged*: “I swear -- by my life and my love of it -- that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine.”<sup>107</sup>

### **Altruism Defined**

Ayn Rand sees altruism as the negation of selfishness in that it “declares that any action taken for the benefit of others is good, and any action taken for one’s own benefit is evil.”<sup>108</sup> One hears in this quote echoes of Soviet propaganda from her youth. Since the key distinction is who benefits from any specific action, an altruistic mindset sees a producer who works for his own profit as a great evil.

In contrast, Ayn Rand believes altruism is evil. She considers it “the ethical theory which regards man as a sacrificial animal, which holds that man has no right to exist for his own sake, that service to others is the only justification of his existence, and that self-sacrifice is his highest moral duty, virtue and value.”<sup>109</sup> Rand labels governments or individuals who take the productive output of others under the guise of altruism as “looters.” Those who take the output of others by emphasizing the guilt of creators for having more than others are tagged by Rand as “moochers.”

In Rand’s view, men should interact with other men only as “producers” who are “traders.” To live, in other words, all men must be productive and therefore can trade value for value with others, freely and without coercion. In this way Rand divides humanity into only two categories: the self and the others. This categorization works well when considering larger groups and free markets but encounters difficulties in explaining families and friendships.

To be consistent, Ayn Rand understands marriage, families, and friendships as being based on a trade of value for value between the self and the other. She would explain that people enter into sexual and marital relationships essentially as “traders,” each seeking an exchange of value for value. From her perspective, sexual desire is an attraction that flows from recognizing one’s highest values in another person.<sup>110</sup>

Ayn Rand’s view of relationships can now be shown using the diagram introduced at the outset of this section. This configuration of the diagram illustrates Rand’s contention that God does not exist, and altruism should be set beyond any consideration of the self. Further, both family members and all others are considered equally (i.e. the basis of relationship is voluntary trade for mutual benefit).

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<sup>107</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 979.

<sup>108</sup> Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, viii.

<sup>109</sup> Ayn Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (Signet Books, 1984), 61.

<sup>110</sup> Rand and Peikoff, *The Journals of Ayn Rand*, 609; Ayn Rand’s view is also expressed in the discussion between Francisco d’Anconia and Hank Reardon. Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 452–4.

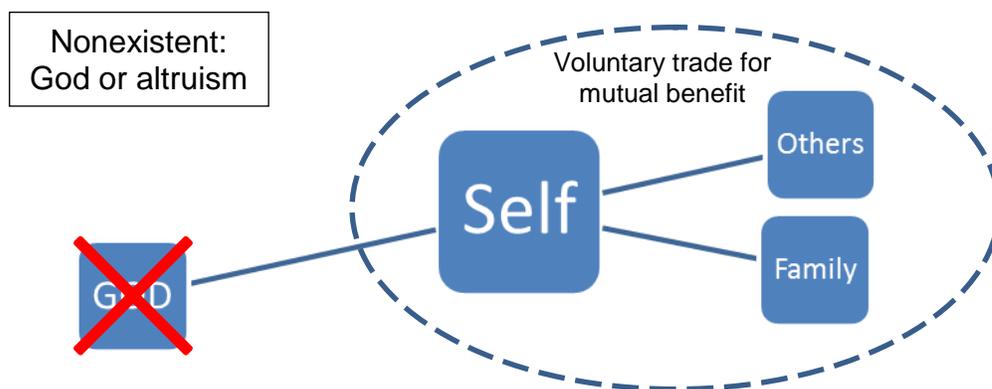


Figure 2: Ayn Rand's View of Personal Relationships

Unquestionably, this theory of how marriages and families work in practice seems quite awkward in her novels.<sup>111</sup> Her two-category system also is ungainly for explaining common exchanges such as gifts. For example, under Rand's system a voluntary gift from a friend to a friend needs to be classified as a selfish act in which one person invests in another based on a personal enjoyment of another person's virtue.<sup>112</sup> Second, in an emergency someone may sacrificially help another for similar reasons. For example, it would be reasonable to toss a lifeline to a drowning man or even to loan money to someone injured and unable to work, though Ayn Rand is careful to classify emergencies as rare and random.<sup>113</sup> Third, a mother may purchase food for her child rather than buying a new hat, but this can still be a selfish act if the mother values the child more than the hat. She is acting in her own self-interest, though this raises questions about what might happen to children whose mothers value things such as hats more highly than children.

Rand's definition of altruism as evil applies best to non-voluntary, non-emergency gifts to others which are coerced from productive people. For this reason, she can be categorically opposed to altruism which takes something of value from a producer and gives it to another solely based on need. This effectively takes life from virtuous people and gives it to people without virtue. Further, such transfers provide a perverse incentive that encourages people to grow in their

<sup>111</sup> Just like Ayn Rand, none of the major characters of any of her novels is a parent of a child, and other than flashbacks children are essentially nonexistent in any of her works. Howard Roark and John Galt both appear as 12-year-olds who have essentially advanced past adolescence and are self-supporting. Heller describes Rand's view that the job of an adolescent is "to integrate the likes and dislikes of childhood into a coherent if subconscious 'sense of life,' which she defined as an implicit appraisal of the nature of the world... depending on how the child answers, he will become a self-assured creator or a passive social parasite." Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 25, 128.

<sup>112</sup> For example, Rand explained that working as a volunteer on a political campaign was an act of "pure selfishness" because she was fighting for her own ideas and the right to express them. Likewise, she referred to helping a relative complete her schooling with the justification, "I considered it an investment." *Ibid.*, 132, 182.

<sup>113</sup> In any case, Rand would focus any generosity on young, competent, and energetic people who were deserving." She felt it was a waste for charities to focus on the "old and the lame" who were less valuable to humanity. *Ibid.*, 182.

needs and to shrink or hide their abilities. It fosters laziness and discourages work in a broader economy.

### **Areas of Biblical Agreement**

Ayn Rand's perspective of selfishness in many ways is consistent with a biblical worldview of self-interest.<sup>114</sup> For example, the Bible agrees that every person has been given one life as a gift from God and makes choices in life with significant consequences. Further, the Bible makes specific appeals to the self-interest of each individual, such as Moses' appeal to the Israelites, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and a curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Indeed, God specifically says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). Ayn Rand's perspective accords with this biblical worldview in that it acknowledges an objective reality (life and death) and the entreaty to choose life.

In addition to choosing life, the Bible enjoins people to make choices consistent with their own prosperity. For example, Paul commands children to obey their parents with the motivation "that it will go well with you that you may live long in the land" according to the promise of God (Ephesians 6:1-3, c.f. Exodus 20:12). Further, Jesus appeals to the self-interest of his disciples when he calls them to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20). The fundamental principle to make choices consistent with one's life and self-interest is the same for both Ayn Rand and the Bible, though they differ on the overall nature of reality and the framework from which this rational decision is made. Ayn Rand would argue that since there is no God, self-interest should be pursued only in light of mortal existence. The consistent witness of the Bible is that self-interest in this life should be balanced with considerations of the value of eternal life. The principle of self-interest is the same, though differing assumptions about reality will lead to significantly different decisions.

A second area of overlap is that man by nature is created for productive work, and it is neither selfish nor evil to personally receive the output of his productive labor. In the beginning, God created a world that anticipated the work of human beings (Genesis 2:5), and even before sin entered the world, God set man to work in the garden (Genesis 2:15). Paul appeals to this understanding when he writes, "Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due" (Romans 4:4; see also Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18). Stealing is wrong and it takes from the life and productive work of another. Paul admonishes churches to "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands" (Ephesians 4:28).

A third area of consistency with the Bible is Ayn Rand's understanding of the individuality of human beings. Just as Ayn Rand found the idea of a "self-less" person abhorrent, the Holy Spirit speaks through the Bible to each person individually. In fact, God knows the number of hairs on a person's head and cares precisely for the span of each individual life (Luke 12:7). While God

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<sup>114</sup> Granted, Ayn Rand's atheistic assumption clashes with the biblical viewpoint, and this will be addressed later in this analysis.

does treat all people equally in some respects, such as providing the common grace of sunshine or rain (Matthew 5:44-48), God calls every individual to turn from death to life (Ezekiel 33:11).

A fourth area of agreement between Ayn Rand and the Bible is that individual persons do not have the right to use force to deprive others of life or property. Only governments sanctioned by God have this prerogative in just causes to restrain evil (Romans 13:1-7). Exchanges of goods between individual people therefore must be either gifts or part of mutually beneficial trade. These four areas of consistency between Ayn Rand and the Bible are foundational for understanding the relationships between people trading in the free markets of a capitalistic economy. The overlap also establishes important principles for government in protecting the lives of individuals and property rights. Nevertheless, Ayn Rand deviates from the Bible in many important ways with respect to altruism and giving to other people.

### Areas of Biblical Disagreement

Ayn Rand's division of all humanity into only two categories of the "self" and the "other" is distinctly different from the Bible. For the purposes of relationships, the Bible includes a third category: family members. A biblical view of relationships can now be shown on the diagram below, and each of the categories will be addressed in turn in the next section. This biblical perspective is consistent with Ayn Rand in that others are treated at arm's length with voluntary trade for mutual benefit. This is one of the fundamental requirements for unleashing the efficiency and wealth-creation of a free market system. On the other hand, the Bible calls for an entirely different category of people based on family relationships where altruism is not only allowable, but expected. In this important realm, mercy and generosity characterize the relationships based on personal value and need rather than mutual exchange.

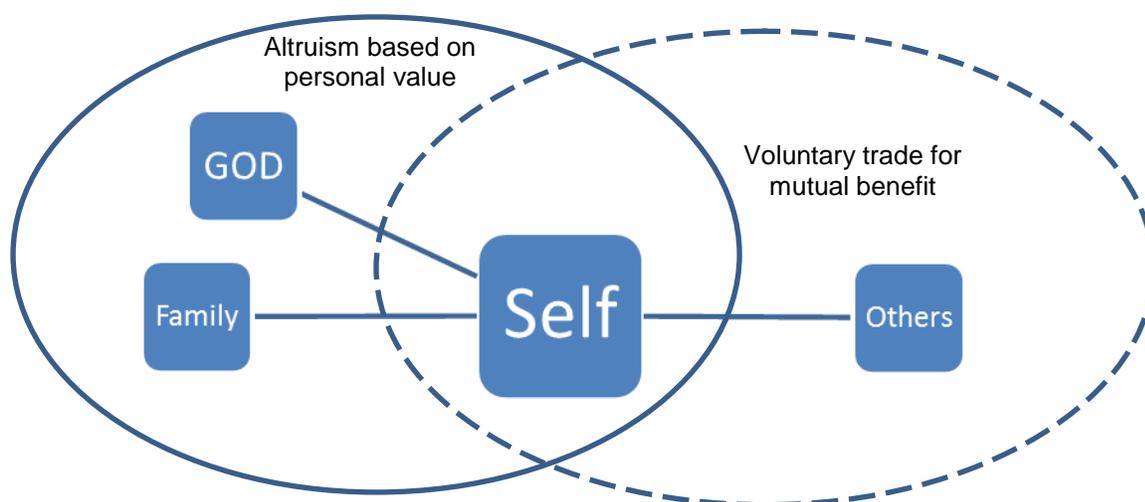


Figure 3: Biblical Perspective of Personal Relationships

### *The Self*

The Bible recognizes and appeals to self-interest but also recognizes that self-interest can be extended to cross a line into the sin of selfishness. Too much focus on the self becomes the biblical category of “self-indulgence,” and it is clear that “she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives” (1 Timothy 5:6). While individuals have the right to profit from productive labor, the right is not a license for hoarding wealth nor self-indulgence. Among the reasons for the destruction of the city of Sodom was that they “had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49).

Self-interest in interpersonal business relationships often can slide into greed. Jesus excoriated the Pharisees who were “full of greed and self-indulgence” (Matthew 23:25). Sinful selfishness can also be manifest in non-economic relationships in the biblical categories of “rivalry” and “selfish ambition.” James is clear that selfish ambition is “earthly, unspiritual, demonic,” and “where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice” (James 3:14-16). Indeed, Christians are positively admonished to “do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).

Practical application of where biblical self-interest crosses over into sinful selfishness in business and interpersonal relationships will be the subject of future research by the author. Nevertheless, the sobriety and importance of this distinction is crystal clear, “for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury” (Romans 2:8).

### *Family Members*

In considering the biblical three-part understanding for humanity, it is important to examine closely the biblical category of the “family of God.” Family members certainly include blood relatives, and also legal ties to a spouse and adopted children. The category also extends to other Christians who are part of the family of God. Jesus referred to everyone who “does the will of my father in heaven” as his “brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; see also Luke 8:19-21). Paul wrote to the Roman church that they were adopted as “children of God” and “fellow heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:14-17). In this way, both Jews and Gentiles are part of the same family as “fellow heirs” (Ephesians 3:6).

This family relationship is not just theoretical but carries real ethical requirements. For example, parents have obligations to their children, as Paul writes, “Children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children” (2 Corinthians 12:14). In the same way, believers should care for their relatives, especially for widows (1 Timothy 5:4, 16). Paul urged Christians to voluntarily and regularly set aside money as a gift to relieve other believers in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-9:5). Therefore, the Bible calls Christians to give to family members who are dependent or in need simply based on these family ties. This middle category of family relationships radically disagrees with Ayn Rand’s perspective because it is in no way a market transaction with the expectation of an exchange of value for value. Instead, such uncompensated, sacrificial care for others can be seen as a spiritual service. According to

Jesus, “as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40; see also v. 45).

Jesus also makes it clear that Christians are to be generous in giving to others in need across social and ethnic boundaries. Even the lawyer testing Jesus could see that the good Samaritan of the parable acted rightly in helping a man who had been robbed and beaten nearly to death (Luke 10:25-37). Ayn Rand would also agree that one could and even should help in emergency circumstances that are beyond the control of an individual, but she expected such situations to be rare and random.

However, Ayn Rand’s condemnation of non-emergency, non-family altruism overlaps somewhat with the Bible when considering needs that result from an ongoing pattern of foolish or rebellious choices by individuals. For example, the Bible encourages aid to helpless people in need such as widows or orphans, but not to those in poverty because of laziness, drunkenness, or following worthless pursuits (Proverbs 23:33-4, 21, 28:19). Further, the Bible makes a clear distinction between helping people who are unable to work to support themselves and idle people who are healthy but unwilling to work for a living (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Despite the similarities, the Bible would disagree with Ayn Rand’s understanding of relationships between members of a family. God is a generous Father, and believers are called to imitate God’s example (Ephesians 5:1). Thus, a father should work productively so that he can provide generously for his family and in essence give part of his life for them. It feels natural (but not pleasurable) for a mother to sacrificially sit through the night with a sick child and in essence give part of her life for another. People should provide ongoing practical assistance to widows, orphans, and frail members of their church as a service rather than in expectation of trade. Christians should even be prepared to help anyone with an unexpected or emergency need. Jesus Christ provides the quintessential example in that he “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).

### *All Others*

There is a significant intersection between the biblical worldview of self-interest and Ayn Rand’s understanding of selfishness when considering trade between people who are not family members. In this broader system, prices for goods and services are established based on free trade between individuals. The price signal works effectively for allocating goods and services to the people who desire them most and have the means to acquire them. Higher prices indicate increasing scarcity and therefore stimulate both conservation of existing resources and greater effort to acquire or manufacture additional supplies of a specific good. Lower prices indicate abundance and encourage people to make substitutions for more expensive goods and discourage producers from further creating such goods.

Most important, people who serve others well (i.e. receive high prices in excess of their costs) are rewarded with profits and the ability to trade with a larger number of people. Prices establish the value of the productivity of an individual to others without the use of force. Prices and free markets effectively govern the interactions between people who are not members of the same family. Consistent with Ayn Rand’s definition of altruism, history has shown that the pursuit of

honest profit has lifted more people from poverty than the forced redistribution of either a communist or socialist system.<sup>115</sup>

### *Conclusions on Selfishness and Altruism*

Ayn Rand divides all people into categories of only the self and the other. With respect to the self, she contends that selfishness is the virtue which allows individuals to be free to live, free to work productively, and free from fear of violence. Her viewpoint accords well with the Bible's understanding of self-interest with respect to the individual, at least from a perspective of mortal life.

In dealing with others, Ayn Rand contends selfishness requires that relationships should fundamentally be based on trade for mutual benefit apart from coercion or violence. Her viewpoint is consistent with a biblical worldview of the marketplace where individuals pursue an honest profit by serving others with fair prices and quality goods.

Rand holds that altruism is evil when force or guilt is used to take life from producers for the benefit of looters and moochers. She argues that it is both thoughtless and corrupt to strip prerogatives from the wealthy to enhance the welfare of the poor, and that such a goal always ends in the destruction of the best people to the detriment of the poorest.<sup>116</sup> Though the Bible is generally biased toward greater generosity, Ayn Rand is consistent with the biblical worldview that honors private property and does not provide charity to able people who are unwilling to work.

Ayn Rand deviates most sharply from the biblical worldview by overlooking an important category of human relationships based on family ties, and this is also where many governments in the world also commit fundamental errors. The Bible has a broad view of families including blood relations, adopted members, and to some extent all believers who are part of the family of God. In fact, God himself is a Person who fits into this category which requires joyful, voluntary self-sacrifice in a way that does not fit into the two-category system of Ayn Rand.

Family members do not fit into Ayn Rand's category of the other, which includes trading for mutual benefit and eschewing altruism. In some sense, family members overlap with her category of duties to one's self. This leads to awkward character development in the relationships in her novels, and even more to the tragic relationships she experienced in her life.

Rand's error is not isolated, however, because many governments mistakenly apply principles of altruism to everyone in society whereas the Bible focuses altruism on the family (see the diagram below). For a mother to feed an infant or a father to pay the utility bill does not necessarily generate laziness or dependence in their offspring. When an impersonal government pays people to not work for more than a year through the unemployment

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<sup>115</sup> Specifically, "if the state could seize the wealth and property a person had acquired through hard work and the use of his own mind, why would anyone bother to invent new things?" Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 222.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

compensation system, some people are tempted to laziness, and others are led to dependence. Officials of such governments would do well to learn from the clear principles of Ayn Rand.<sup>117</sup>

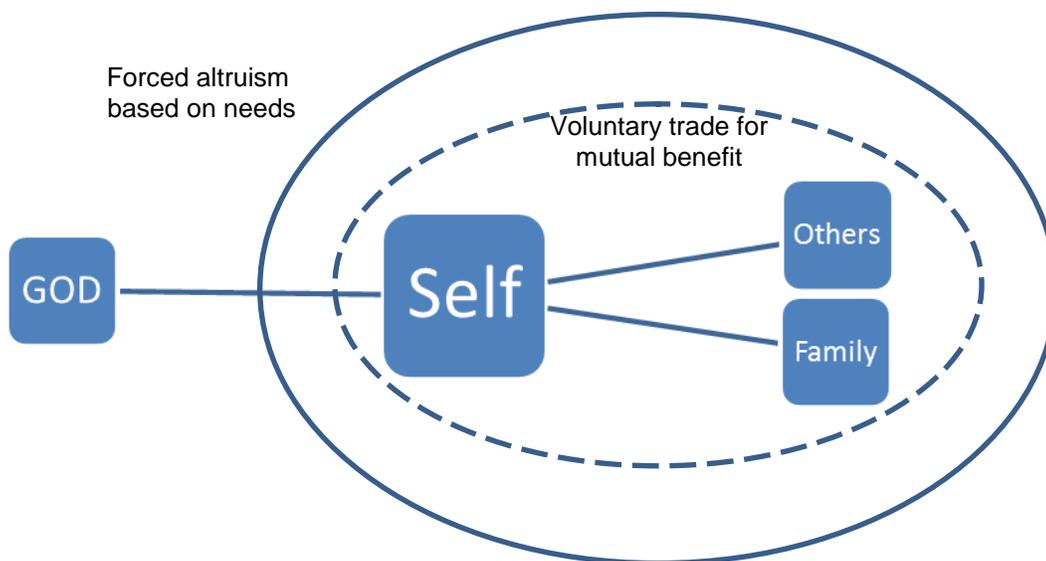


Figure 4: Typical Governmental View of Personal Relationships

In summary, Ayn Rand erroneously treats family members as if they were “others,” while socialist governments err in redistributing wealth to “others” as if they were family members. Both errors lead to negative economic and societal consequences. The Bible recognizes three categories of humanity: the self, the family, and others (including enemies) and prescribes duties to each consistent with God’s design.

## Ayn Rand’s Philosophy: Anthropology and Gender

The previous discussion of selfishness and self-interest applied to every human being generically, but this section will analyze Ayn Rand’s anthropology by considering the characters portrayed in her novels along three dimensions which distinguish groups of individuals from each other. She champions individualists against collectives of people. Also, Rand sees everyone falling into the category of being either a creator or a second-hander. Finally, her singular understanding of what it means to be a human male or female in her novels reflects her personal experience in life. Each of these dimensions of anthropology are important in the

<sup>117</sup> Ayn Rand’s scathing illustration of the outcome of treating others like a family can be found in *Atlas Shrugged*. Under management of the heirs of the founder, the Twentieth Century Motor Company began to treat employees as “one big family” with catastrophic results. From this disaster, former employee John Galt resolved to stop the motor of the world. Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 607–18.

novels of Ayn Rand and will be investigated successively in the following sections as summarized in the following table:

<b>Anthropological Dimensions</b>	
Individualists	Collectivists
Creators	Second-handers
Male	Female

Ayn Rand's view of humanity is both one of the most important aspects of her novels and an area in which she dramatically diverges from a biblical worldview. Her methodology of character development was to "observe real life, analyze the reasons which make people such as they are, draw an abstraction and then create my own characters out of that abstraction."<sup>118</sup> Her goal with her characters was to focus certain human attributes more sharply and consistently than an average human being. Therefore, scrutinizing her intentionally-developed characters provides valid insights into her personal understanding.

### **Individuals vs. Collectivists**

A cursory reading of any of her novels shows Ayn Rand's division of mankind along the dimension of individualists and collectivists. This dimension is obviously influenced by her background in Russia, and for Rand these categories of humanity had moral, political, economic, and philosophical implications.<sup>119</sup>

Morally, Rand sees the unique and precious individual human life as the standard by which good is judged. Anything which sustains and enriches life is good, while anything that negates and impoverishes the individual's pursuit of happiness is evil.<sup>120</sup> As a result, political and economic systems that protect individual freedom and foster human happiness are the proper institutions to develop and maintain.

Along these lines, Rand demonstrated uncanny insight in deconstructing political assumptions and exposing the logical outcomes of collectivist thinking.<sup>121</sup> She understood that totalitarianism was both immoral and impractical because "the independent motivation indispensable to economic and social progress cannot survive in an atmosphere of intimidation, coercion, and lack of individually earned rewards."<sup>122</sup> From her view nothing less than the survival of mankind depended on individuals overcoming collectivist thinking.

<sup>118</sup> Rand, "To the Readers of The Fountainhead," 671.

<sup>119</sup> Rand also gave distinguishing physical characteristics to these two groups. In her novels, the collectivists were always disheveled, saggy, watery, and unattractive. The individual creators were always tall, slender, strong, and beautiful.

<sup>120</sup> Gladstein, *The New Ayn Rand Companion, Revised and Expanded Edition*, 29.

<sup>121</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, xiii.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

Philosophically, she sees “man” and “mankind” as diametrically opposed conceptions. Man, in his natural self-reverence, must worship his own highest potentiality, and therefore it would be a mistake to worship mankind as a collective.<sup>123</sup> Ayn Rand believed that only a few in each generation will actually grasp and achieve the full reality of man’s proper stature, and that every other person in that generation would betray his personal nature.<sup>124</sup> Further, she sees no grounds for optimism with respect to such betrayers. In Rand’s mind, only an attitude of indifference is a proper role for an individual creator in the midst of such men.<sup>125</sup> Another characteristic of her heroes is a striking distinction between the individual and the mob of men. These men had “no organ for understanding, the necessity, meaning, or importance of other people.” Not only was it as if other people did not exist, her heroes could not understand why others should even exist.<sup>126</sup>

As previously noted, Ayn Rand is consistent with biblical teaching in her high value placed on individuals. The Bible declares that God actually seeks a relationship with each person in the world. Nevertheless, the Bible shows that people are to work collectively both as members of families and as local churches. In this sense, it is appropriate for a husband and father to sacrifice his life for the benefit of his wife and children because he is the leader of the family. While in extreme cases this might extend to actually dying to protect his family, more commonly it means sacrificing time, sweat, and effort to “earn a living” for those under his care.

In the same way a local church is considered part of the family of God, and unpaid sacrifices are expected in the Bible. Ayn Rand denied any reality to the spiritual dimension of churches and therefore could see them as only human organizations for extorting or cajoling resources from producers. While the Bible would condemn any organizations matching Rand’s description while pretending to be local churches, this does not deny the spiritual reality of true churches of Christ.

When extended to the political sphere, Ayn Rand’s approach is much more closely aligned to the biblical understanding of the role of governments. Collectivist governments with forced altruism provide greater temptations to corruption and more often lead to widespread poverty than governments allowing capitalist economic systems. The Bible condemns both public and private corruption and favors the relief of poverty through both generosity and hard work.

The two dimensions of creators and looters, as well as individuals and collectivists, overlap to some degree and could be applied to either men or women, as will be seen in the next section.

### **Creators vs. Second-handers**

The origin of these two types of people can be understood from Rand’s perspective of adolescent development where each person develops a sense of life either as a self-assured creator or as a passive social parasite.<sup>127</sup> Despite her statements to the contrary, Ayn Rand

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<sup>123</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 4.

<sup>124</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition*, xi.

<sup>125</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 3.

<sup>126</sup> Heller notes how aptly this describes Rand herself. Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 70.

<sup>127</sup> Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto*, Revised. (New York: Signet, 1971), 28.

seems to be strongly influenced by the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche in seeing society as consisting of a few great creators (Nietzsche's *Übermensch*) surrounded by vast hordes of the "last men" (Nietzsche's *der letzte Mensch*).<sup>128</sup>

The characteristics of these two nuanced categories might best be conveyed through an analysis of an extended quote from her preparatory notes for *Atlas Shrugged*. The following paragraph begins with Rand's definition of a creator and ends with her understanding of the second-handers:

It is proper for a creator to have an unlimited confidence in himself and his ability, to feel certain that he can get anything he wishes out of life, that he can accomplish anything he decides to accomplish, and that it's up to him to do it. (He feels that because he is a man of reason...) Here is what he must keep clearly in mind: it is true that a creator can accomplish anything he wishes -- if he functions according to the nature of man, the universe and his own proper morality, that is, if he does not place his wish primarily within others and does not attempt or desire anything that is of a collective nature, anything that concerns others *primarily* or requires primarily the exercise of the will of others. (This would be an immoral desire or attempt, contrary to his nature as a creator.) If he attempts that, he is out of the creator's province and in that of the collectivist and the second hander.<sup>129</sup>

This paragraph illustrates the characteristics of the two types of people. A creator depends upon no one but himself yet can have unlimited confidence in his ability to accomplish anything undertaken according to his rational nature, the nature of the universe, and his own morality. Because nature has provided neither claws nor leaves to obtain food, a creator uses reason to survive. As a rational man, the creator respects the nature of the universe as objective reality, but is not limited by the earth. In other words, mountains are made for dynamite and tunnels while the waves of vast oceans are to be cut by yachts commanded by creators. The highest moral good of a creator is to pursue his own happiness as long as it does not entail initiating force against others.

If a creator depends on other people or attempts anything of a collective nature, then he has descended from the province of a creator and into the realm of "second-handers." People living second-hand lives are evil societal parasites whose lives depend on the ideas and work of the creators. Being a second-hander could take the form of a social climber who simply wants more than others of whatever it is another person has. Rand points out that such a second-hander has no self as a source of values. Second-handers can also take the resources of creators. Government officials and individuals who utilize force to elicit sacrifice from creators fall into the category of "looters." Religious organizations and social improvement groups who utilize guilt to secure the willing sacrifice of the creators fall into the category of "moochers."

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<sup>128</sup> See Appendix B for more details about the influence of Nietzsche on Rand.

<sup>129</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 4.

In her personal life Rand had the highest esteem for producers (of whom she considered herself the epitome), but was indifferent toward, or even loathed, common people. Accordingly, she described New York as a “great desert of people and events that evoked nothing but contempt and revulsion.”<sup>130</sup> Therefore, she refused to settle for anything less than the ideal worlds of her novels. She even supported arguments by quoting her own characters as if they were independent people.<sup>131</sup>

Ayn Rand’s high value for creators is largely consistent with a biblical understanding of anthropology. God himself is extolled as the creator of heaven and earth, and Revelation 4:11 ascribes glory and honor and power to God for creating all things. God’s creativity generated practical aspects of the earth such as iron ore or timber but also extends to the beautiful and even whimsical, such as the myriad of flowers, butterflies, and starfish.

In the same way, believers are admonished to “be imitators of God” (Ephesians 5:1) and this certainly extends to joy in creating and producing good things from the earth. The cultural mandate of Genesis 1 shows that human beings were created to subdue the creation and to make it useful. Moses spoke highly of a craftsman at the tabernacle who by the Spirit of God was filled “with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft” (Exodus 35:30-33). Paul also pointed out that God has gifted individuals in the church with specific abilities for many different functions (Romans 12:3-13; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:8-14).

Since God sets the ultimate standard of value with his own character, people do not derive self-worth from comparison with other mortals. As mentioned before, the Bible contends that people who do not produce because of laziness or foolishness should not receive even sustenance from producers (2 Thessalonians 3:10). For this reason leaders in the early church intentionally set an example of laboring and toiling to neither be a burden on anyone nor eat anyone’s bread without paying for it (2 Thessalonians 3:8). Of course taking the possessions of another by force is stealing, and the Bible is unequivocal in condemning this practice (Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19; Ephesians 4:28). For these reasons, Ayn Rand’s contempt for moochers and looters is consistent with the Bible.

In contrast, Ayn Rand’s disdain or indifference toward common people is inconsistent with the biblical perspective. In the church not only gifted leaders are commended, but all the people who make up the church, especially those who are low in honor (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). The Bible considers even enemies to be worthy of love (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35). Jesus encountered hatred and lethal hostility from the people of the world. Nevertheless the Gospel of John is clear about God’s response to all the people of the world: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

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<sup>130</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition*, vi.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

The next section will consider Ayn Rand's singular understanding of gender roles.

## Gender

Understanding manhood and womanhood as portrayed by Ayn Rand's novels provides helpful insights into the mind of the author. Ayn Rand was clear that "My research material for the psychology of Roark was myself."<sup>132</sup> As Rand claimed for herself, Howard Roark has no doubts, conflicts or mixed emotions, which would be a sign of faulty thinking. Instead Roark's values, emotions, and actions flow in a unified stream from the Fountainhead of his creative values. Here moral integrity is "forceful, ruthless, and erotic."<sup>133</sup> While some object that Roark "could not possibly be a human being," Rand contends that he is the one genuine human being in the book. In other words, he embodies "precisely those qualities which constitute a human being, as distinguished from an animal."<sup>134</sup>

Ayn Rand has a high view of men and women that is consistent with the Bible in many ways. Undoubtedly if more people emulated her leading men and women, society would be vastly improved. Nevertheless, in the area of gender Ayn Rand makes some of her deepest and most hurtful errors about human beings. Thus her characterization of men and women must be selectively considered with a careful analysis through a biblical lens. This analysis will first consider manhood, womanhood, and sexuality from a biblical perspective.

### *Manhood*

In many ways, the leading men portrayed by Ayn Rand and the villains that she presents with disgust are perfectly consistent with good and bad people described in the Bible. Positively, Howard Roark and John Galt are articulate, athletic, decisive, long-suffering, and monogamous. They are clearly leaders of men, creative workers, and lovers of knowledge. All of these are biblical qualities, and society would be improved if more men possessed or at least pursued these characteristics.

In many ways, men in Rand's novels treat women with respect and care, although of course the Bible does not approve of extra-marital sexual relationships, serial monogamy, or a light view of marriage.

According to *Atlas Shrugged*, "the shape of John Galt's mouth was pride." This description is similar to one of Ayn Rand's first loves. She was attracted by his good looks, but said "the quality I liked about him most was arrogance."<sup>135</sup> In contrast, the Bible calls men to humility, especially to humble, loving leadership in marriage.

Another area of significant divergence from the biblical worldview is the absolute absence of sexual jealousy in the hearts of Rand's male characters. Howard Roark expresses no objection when his beautiful mistress marries and divorces first Peter Keating and then Gail Wynand. Instead, he waits patiently for her to complete her perverse penance and apprehend in the end that he is the ideal man.<sup>136</sup> Likewise, Dagny Taggart's prior industrialist lovers all politely step

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<sup>132</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 123.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>134</sup> Rand, "To the Readers of *The Fountainhead*," 671.

<sup>135</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 43.

<sup>136</sup> Gladstein, *The New Ayn Rand Companion, Revised and Expanded Edition*, 28.

aside in turn as they recognize that she must have John Galt, the man who epitomizes her highest ideals. Interestingly, the Bible reveals that God himself is jealous of important things (such as his chosen people or his own glory). It is appropriate for a husband in the image of God to be jealous of his wife, so this lack of jealousy in Ayn Rand's male characters is a significant defect.

Similarly, John Galt and Howard Roark both live without marked emotional conflicts. While Roark experiences pain, Galt does not. Absence of emotion is one of the qualities Dagny Taggart prizes in John Galt's face and manner. This level of abstraction was intentional. Rand said that John Galt "is definitely presented as a man as a God. To some extent that's true of all of my heroes, but in Galt it's most pronounced."<sup>137</sup> In speaking of her characterization of John Galt, Rand said "one does not approach a God too closely -- one does not get too intimate with him -- one maintains a respectful distance from his inner life."<sup>138</sup>

The Bible understands that men were created in the image of God, so Ayn Rand's assessment is close to the biblical understanding that humanity is the capstone of all of creation and worthy of respect for bearing the *imago dei*. Notwithstanding, the Bible is clear that there is only one God, and this stands in marked contrast to Ayn Rand's female characters who worship men.

### *Womanhood*

Ayn Rand's main female characters all share "slender physiques, defiant stances, and inner calm."<sup>139</sup> They are educated and accomplished women, not unlike the commendable model woman from Proverbs 31 of the Bible. They uniformly are passionate about life and appreciate the abundance of the earth. The Bible values joyful, intelligent women, but places a lower value on external appearances in contrast to beauty of the heart (1 Peter 3:3-6).

Despite the torrid sexuality of her novels, none of Rand's male or female characters ever have children. This is consistent with the personal life of Ayn Rand and many of Ayn Rand's followers who would also forgo having children after her example.<sup>140</sup> In contrast, the Bible considers children to be a blessing of the Lord, and a fundamental part of being human is the desire to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28).

Most disturbingly, the female protagonists in her novels always exhibit "man worship" and place a heroic male lover above everything else in their lives.<sup>141</sup> Rand thought a woman should always appear before her lover at her best and never be found cooking, cleaning, or at any other humble work, and this was highlighted in her narratives.<sup>142</sup> Her novels generally included a sexual triangle "in which a man-worshipping woman juggles two or more male lovers, typically in service of a high ideal."<sup>143</sup> Specifically, Rand contends that women "long to be man worshipers

<sup>137</sup> Nathaniel Branden, *Judgment Day*, First ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin (T), 1989), 110.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Gladstein, *The New Ayn Rand Companion, Revised and Expanded Edition*, 26.

<sup>140</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 128.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>142</sup> This would become characteristic of the protagonist Kira in *We the Living*. Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 68. Even when Dagny Taggart chose the role of, housekeeper, and general servant to John Galt, this was an act of utter humiliation and self-debasement in *Atlas Shrugged*.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

with their bodies *and* their souls and to meet with the highest possible types of men.”<sup>144</sup> Obviously, the Bible reserves worship for God alone. Further, husbands should engage their wives with humble, loving headship, and wives should respond with joyful, intelligent submission. Such mutual relationships are far from the seemingly blind man-worship offered by Ayn Rand’s female characters, who sacrifice their bodies and livelihood for lovers.

### *Sexuality*

The sex and rape scenes of Ayn Rand’s novels created quite a stir among readers in the 1940s and 1950s. This paper will offer only a passing note about the portrayal of human sexuality in Ayn Rand’s novels to the extent that it is illustrative of her damaging understanding of gender relationships.

While a naïve reader simply observing the details described in the text of *The Fountainhead* likely would conclude that the virginal Dominique Francon was forcibly raped by Howard Roark, the author contends that the scene depicted “rape by engraved invitation.”<sup>145</sup> Ayn Rand understands that Howard Roark was acting rationally in responding to his sexual desires based on his ultimate objective ideals and that Dominique Francon was longing to be dominated by a man she worshiped. Notably, their ensuing active sexual relationship (which continued throughout the novel) maintained this sense of domination and struggle against power.

In the same way, the tall, slender, elegant heiress Dominique Francon first experiences the contemptuous gaze of Howard Roark as a slap in the face, yet this elicits “a convulsion of anger, of protest, of resistance -- and of pleasure.”<sup>146</sup> She understood his very glance as an act of his ownership over her, and this leads her to thoughts imagining his naked body beneath his damp, sweaty clothes under the burning sun of a granite quarry. Ayn Rand later confided how she specifically identified with her character Dominique.<sup>147</sup>

Along these lines, Dagny Taggart in *Atlas Shrugged* experiences the first embrace of Hank Reardon like “an act of hatred, like the cutting blow of a lash encircling her body.” Yet she acquiesces, thinking “whatever pride of person I hold... that is what I offer you for the pleasure of your body.”<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Kira, the female protagonist of *We the Living*, is portrayed as experiencing pleasure in being sexually dominated by her lovers. Though in later editions Ayn Rand excised the love scene in which Kira imagined being whipped by a lover, the “gauzy sadomasochism” remained evident in the book.<sup>149</sup> It is biblically disturbing that such love/pain was experienced by every one of Ayn Rand’s female lead characters.

### **Conclusions on Anthropology and Gender**

First, history has proven Ayn Rand to be correct in her crusade against collectivism and in favor of the economic and political institutions that support the high value of an individual human life.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 228. Italics original.

<sup>145</sup> Barbara Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, New ed. (Anchor, 1987), 134 n. 1.

<sup>146</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead*, *Centennial Edition*, 205.

<sup>147</sup> In the same way, Ayn Rand saw Dagny Taggart as also modeled after herself. Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, 134, 225.

<sup>148</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 236.

<sup>149</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 87.

Second, society would be vastly improved if people pursued becoming creators rather than settling into being moochers and looters. These categories illustrated in her novels are exceptionally helpful in pointing out the logical end of a seemingly merciful and altruistic view of humanity. Nevertheless, the Bible shows that there is room for altruism within the category of family relationships and in society. We are called to love not only our brothers and sisters in Christ but our neighbors no matter what their religious or moral beliefs or ethnic backgrounds. We are even called to love our enemies.

Finally, Ayn Rand's view of manhood and womanhood diverges significantly from the biblical ideal for men and women. The resulting effects on interpersonal relationships, especially sexuality, are grievous in real life, although they work out well in the novel world that Rand created. This distinction will be even clearer in considering the atheism of Ayn Rand.

### **Ayn Rand's Philosophy: Atheism and Christology**

Ayn Rand was an outspoken atheist who assumed that the atheism of her characters was well established in the minds of readers by the very nature of her novels.<sup>150</sup> The very thought of an omniscient being was repulsive to Rand because such a being would be by definition a hateful totalitarian dictator regardless of how his absolute power was used.<sup>151</sup> Ultimately Ayn Rand's atheism was related to her anthropology and high view of man. She felt that God was an invention of man. She was concerned that if God did exist and was perfect, then this would overshadow man and demonstrate man to be an imperfect and "low" being by comparison.<sup>152</sup>

Rand particularly despised Christianity because she thought any insistence on suffering and brotherhood could be "the best possible kindergarten of communism."<sup>153</sup> She dismissed the whole business of religion as perverse, along with any hypothetical entities or spheres "that the human mind was by its nature inadequate to understand" except by revelation.<sup>154</sup>

Rand further objected that religion had turned morality against man and that it held a monopoly in the field of ethics that "made it extremely difficult to communicate the emotional meaning and connotation of a rational view of life."<sup>155</sup> She also objected that religion "arrogated to itself" the most exalted category of abstractions: ethics which were the realm of values and man's code of good and evil.<sup>156</sup> Ayn Rand professed that human reason, not an impossibly good deity, was the only possible basis of morality.

Rand's novel *Anthem* and its biblical overtones provide concise insight into her understanding of man as his own deity. The primary focus of *Anthem* is opposition to collectivist conformity with its devastating effect on human innovation and even the ability to love. Nevertheless, the main

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<sup>150</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition*, viii.

<sup>151</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 172.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>155</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition*, ix.

<sup>156</sup> Rand linked ethics with the emotional connotations of height, uplift, nobility, reverence, grandeur -- all of which pertain to the realm of man's values. *Ibid.*, viii.

character (named Equality 7-2521) uses electricity to create light, with a clear allusion to the creation of the universe and God's command, "let there be light."<sup>157</sup> Taking the prerogative that God gave the biblical Adam,<sup>158</sup> Equality 7-2521 named himself Prometheus (the bringer of fire light) and named his wife Gaea (mother of the gods). This dystopian primitive society of the future is dimly aware of an "Unspeakable Word." In Jewish tradition the unspeakable Word is the name of the Lord ("Yahweh"). Jesus Christ shocked his hearers by applying this title of deity to himself (*egō eimi* in John 8:58). In Rand's world of *Anthem* the unspeakable name of deity is the individualistic "I" and this underlies the climactic final word of the novel "EGO".

Interestingly, though Rand dismissed the concept of God and loathed organized religion, her novels project an ideal man who bears an uncanny resemblance to Jesus Christ. Ironically, Ayn Rand projected John Galt as a man who is God, using many characteristics that are identical to Jesus, the God who is man. Without exaggeration, Rand presented the greatest need of mankind as a person like Jesus Christ. Consider the similarities in the following section.

### The "Christology" of Ayn Rand

Ayn Rand did not believe in the existence of God and therefore set out in her novels with the intention of portraying the ideal man. For example, John Galt is consistent, fully-integrated, and perfect. Yet it is ironic that Ayn Rand's ideal man is exactly like Jesus Christ in many ways. The parallels are substantial, and can be summarized as follows:

Without question, Jesus Christ is the central figure of the Bible. With only minor simplification, it can be said that Old Testament points forward to his birth, the four Gospels describe his life and sacrificial death, and the rest of the New Testament explains the significance of his life and future return. In *Atlas Shrugged* John Galt is a towering figure who moves the world and is necessarily central to the lives of all the characters, even though he does not appear in person until the final third of the book. Earlier parts of the book foreshadow his coming and speak of his name like Jesus in the Bible.<sup>159</sup> In one of her preparatory notes for *Atlas Shrugged*, Ayn Rand wrote:

It is proper for a creator to have an unlimited confidence in himself and his ability, to feel certain that he can get anything he wishes out of life, that he can accomplish anything he decides to accomplish, and that it's up to him to do it.<sup>160</sup>

This statement is precisely true if the referent of the word "creator" is Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals that Jesus Christ is unlimited in power and wisdom, and he serves as the agent of all creation (Colossians 1:15-17; Ephesians 3:8-12). Rand's referent for "creator" in this passage is John Galt, who "is definitely presented as a man as a God. To some extent that's true of all of my heroes, but in Galt it's most pronounced."<sup>161</sup> In speaking of her characterization of John Galt's emotional distance, Rand said "one does not approach a God too closely -- one does not

<sup>157</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 102.

<sup>158</sup> See Genesis 2:19 and 3:20.

<sup>159</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 5.

<sup>160</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged - 50th Anniversary Edition*, 4; The extended journal entry developing Dagny Taggart can be found in Rand and Peikoff, *The Journals of Ayn Rand*.

<sup>161</sup> Branden, *Judgment Day*, 110.

get too intimate with him -- one maintains a respectful distance from his inner life."<sup>162</sup> Howard Roark, Rand's protagonist in *The Fountainhead*, is also projected as the ideal man and will be considered in this discussion because he shares remarkable similarities with both Jesus Christ and John Galt.

For example, at the outset of *The Fountainhead*, Howard Roark concludes that the soaring granite cliffs are there for him, "waiting for the drill, the dynamite and my voice; waiting to be split, ripped, pounded, reborn; waiting for the shape my hands will give them."<sup>163</sup> This more than echoes the voice of God in Genesis creating the universe and mirrors the biblical description of Jesus Christ, "for by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth... all things were created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

Second, Howard Roark exudes moral certainty, self-confidence, unwillingness to compromise, and single-mindedness in pursuit of his goal. This exactly imitates the moral certainty of Jesus Christ delivering the Sermon on the Mount on the foundation of his own authority, unlike the teaching of the religious scribes in the first century (Matthew 7:24). Jesus Christ demonstrated a fearless confidence in the face of crowds or soldiers seeking to kill him (John 10:31-33; 18:2-12) and while standing before rulers of the Jewish people and mighty Rome (John 18:28—19:13). He was equally uncompromising in his mission, even in the face of temptation from the devil himself (Luke 4:1-13).

Third, John Galt gives the impression of omniscience with his immense knowledge of philosophy, physics, aircraft, railroads and so forth. He knows the thoughts of people such that he and Dagny Taggart often communicate without words, relying on subtle glances and rational understandings. This closely imitates the way Jesus interacted with people based on his knowledge of the thoughts of their hearts (Matthew 9:4; Luke 9:47).

Fourth, John Galt is consistently seeking morally upright people (creators who are true to the highest virtue of selfishness) who are despairing in a fallen world in order to take them to his valley of paradise, Galt's Gulch. Jesus Christ came to seek and save lost people from a fallen world, and to a thief on a cross he said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Many industrialists disappear suddenly and go to his valley after a personal conversation with John Galt, similar to the personal conversations that Jesus had with individuals like the Jewish teacher Nicodemus (John 3) or the Samaritan woman (John 4).

Fifth, in their respective novels Galt and Roark each love a single woman with both passion and patience for years, and this is similar to Christ's love for his bride, the church. Both of Rand's men seek to purify and clarify the character of the woman they adore, just as "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:25-27). Ayn Rand ends both of her two greatest novels with the image of a Christ-like figure. In the last line of *The Fountainhead*,

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead*, Centennial Edition, 16.

Dominique Francon has ended her penance and rides a construction elevator to the top of the skyscraper Roark designed, where “She rose above the spires of churches. Then there was only the ocean and the sky and the figure of Howard Roark.” Likewise, in the last lines of *Atlas Shrugged*, Dagny is with John Galt when he announces “We are going back to the world.” At that point he “raised his hand and over the desolate earth he traced in space the sign of the dollar.” The parallels are clear with the biblical new heavens and new earth where Jesus will live with his people (Revelation 21, 22). The church used the sign of the cross of Christ, of course, rather than the sign of the dollar.

Sixth, in his exalted and exultant radio speech John Galt calls the world to repentance while pronouncing judgment on the world. Jesus Christ similarly “commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:30-31). John Galt is also similar to Jesus in that “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day” (John 12:48).

Seventh, the electric lights at night in Galt’s Gulch receive power from the limitless, eternal motor provided by John Galt. No lamps are needed on the new earth because the glory of Jesus Christ himself serves as the light (Revelation 21:23). John Galt protects the people in his valley from the pain and despair of the outside world using his personally-developed refractor rays, while Jesus keep evil out of the new Jerusalem so that there is no longer any death, mourning, crying or pain (Revelation 21:4).

Eighth, an individual cannot enter into Galt’s Gulch without taking an oath by the highest ideal in the world: “I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, or ask another man to live for mine.”<sup>164</sup> Deliverance into the new heavens begins when one will “confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead” (Romans 10:9).

Ninth, when Howard Roark is on trial, he is silent, like Jesus Christ who did not speak at his trial before Herod (Luke 23:8-11; cf. Acts 8:32-35). Rather than speaking a single word in his own defense, Roark presents pictures of his architectural work to the judge, just as Jesus had previously presented his own works as his defense. To a murderous crowd, Jesus said, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” (John 10:32).

Tenth, Rand initially felt she needed to defend every single man of mankind, “no matter how weak or strong.” However, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra demonstrated to her “that it doesn’t have to be collective. In other words, that the species can be vindicated by one man.”<sup>165</sup> In this way, John Galt became like Jesus Christ, who had already given his life to vindicate all who would believe (Hebrews 9:15).

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<sup>164</sup> Luskin and Greta, *I Am John Galt*, 265.

<sup>165</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 42.

Finally, in a powerful culminating scene of *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt had been betrayed by a friend (similar to Jesus in Mark 14:42-45) and undergoes a modern crucifixion. Galt is stripped naked and strapped to the “Stoddard Persuader” to be slowly and excruciatingly electrocuted in front of his accusers. Like Jesus, Galt does not cry out despite his agony. Jesus was mocked during his crucifixion, and John Galt similarly is mocked by his antagonist James Taggart (Luke 23:33-37). Just as Jesus forgave his executors, Galt offers verbal suggestions of how to repair the torture-machine when it breaks down. Just as Jesus was gloriously in control of his death through suffering and voluntarily yielded his life, John Galt is the most human person in the room while being tortured with the Stoddard Persuader.

Not surprisingly, Ayn Rand’s favorite painting was *Corpus Hypercubus* by Salvador Dali.<sup>166</sup> Her biographer reports that she spent hours contemplating this oil on canvas hanging at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The painting was deeply moving to Rand because “she felt a kinship between her personal view of John Galt’s defiance over his torture in *Atlas Shrugged* and Dali’s depiction of the suffering of Jesus.”<sup>167</sup>

All these similarities between Jesus Christ and the heroes of Ayn Rand lead naturally to the question of whether she deliberately included the similarities. In *Anthem* Rand intentionally appropriated biblical language and imagery to demonstrate that the man is his own God, showing that she had sufficient knowledge of the Bible for such a purpose. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that Rand imitated Jesus Christ in such a flattering way on purpose. Rather, it is more likely Ayn Rand employed her remarkable insight into human beings and clear rationality about the nature of the universe and independently arrived at the characteristics of the ideal man needed by all of humanity.

Thus, it is ironic that the ideal man that Ayn Rand longed for so greatly in the world that she created turns out to bear an uncanny resemblance to Jesus Christ. The magnificent storyline of *Atlas Shrugged* imitates the ultimate narrative of salvation history revealed in the Bible.

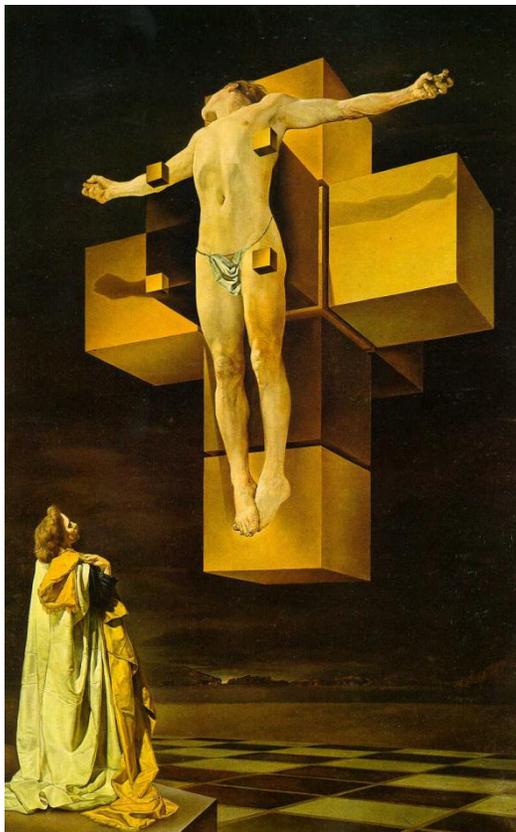


Figure 5: *Corpus Hypercubus* by Salvador Dali

<sup>166</sup> Salvador Dali, *Corpus Hypercubus*, 1954, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

<sup>167</sup> Britting, *Ayn Rand*, 93.

## Conclusion

Ayn Rand was a remarkable person who lived with all of her might to project her image of the ideal man. Gratitude is appropriate for her enthralling novels and philosophical insights into the world. Her crusade against collectivism helped stem communist thinking and called people to see the value of each individual life.

Rand's clearly-portrayed categories of creators versus second-handers have resonated with millions of people, and governments of the world would benefit from Rand's insights on altruism. Nevertheless, Ayn Rand is missing the biblical category of "family" (biological, spiritual, or human), and this radically limits relationships between human beings to only trading value for value. While such a trade is essential for a capitalistic economy, it does not capture the full scope of human existence. In addition, a biblical lens shows Rand's understanding of gender and sexuality to be seriously flawed, and these errors caused great suffering in her life.

Finally, Ayn Rand's atheism is antithetical to a biblical worldview; yet her novels and their main characters overlap significantly in many ways. The magnificent storyline of *Atlas Shrugged* imitates the ultimate narrative of salvation history as revealed in the Bible. The ideal man that Ayn Rand both created and desired bears an uncanny resemblance to Jesus Christ.

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## Appendix A

Year	Age	Chronology of significant events in the life of Ayn Rand
1905	0	Born in St. Petersburg on February 2 (January 20 on the Julian calendar).
1912	7	Family moved to an apartment on Znamenskaya Square.
1917	12	Start of the 1917 revolution. Bolsheviks seized power on October 25; Ayn was in her father's drugstore when it was confiscated by soldiers.
1918	13	Ayn Rand's family moved to the Ukraine then to the Crimea. The front in the civil war between the White and Red Armies moved back and forth across the town of Yevpatoria several times.
1921	16	Graduated from Yevpatoria High School #4 and enrolled in Petrograd State University. Family returned to Petrograd.
1924	19	Graduated from Leningrad State University and enrolled in State Technicum for Screen Arts.
1925	20	Received permission to leave the USSR.
1926	21	Departed Leningrad and traveled to Chicago, then moved on to Hollywood. Cecil B. DeMille hired her as a movie extra on <i>The King of Kings</i> . Met Frank O'Connor, her future husband.
1926	22	Hired by Cecil B. DeMille as a junior screenwriter.
1929	24	Married to Frank O'Connor and hired by RKO Pictures in wardrobe department.
1931	26	Became a citizen of the United States.
1932	27	Sold "Read the Pawn" to Universal Pictures.
1934	29	First play <i>Night of January 16<sup>th</sup></i> (a.k.a. <i>Woman on Trial</i> ) opened in Hollywood. Moved to New York City.
1935	30	<i>Night of January 16<sup>th</sup></i> opens on Broadway. Made first notes for <i>The Fountainhead</i> .
1938	33	<i>Anthem</i> published in England after being written in three weeks.
1940	35	<i>The Unconquered</i> (adapted from <i>We the Living</i> ) opened on Broadway.
1943	38	<i>The Fountainhead</i> published; moved to California to write the screenplay for <i>The Fountainhead</i> .
1944	39	Purchased the von Sternberg House designed by Richard Neutra; hired by Hall Wallis as a screenwriter for six months each year.
1945	40	Made first notes for <i>Atlas Shrugged</i> .
1947	42	Testified on Communist influence in Hollywood before the House Un-American Activities Committee.
1949	44	<i>The Fountainhead</i> film released starring Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal.
1950	45	Met Nathaniel Branden, starting an affair with grudging assent from spouses.
1951	46	Moved permanently to New York City following Nathaniel Branden.
1952	47	"The Collective" begins meeting.
1955	50	Finished writing "Galt's Speech."
1957	52	<i>Atlas Shrugged</i> published.

1963	58	Received honorary doctorate from Lewis and Clark University.
1964	59	<i>The Virtue of Selfishness</i> published.
1967	62	Made first appearance on <i>The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson</i> .
1968	63	Destroyed the Nathaniel Branden Institute after learning of his affair.
1974	69	Diagnosed with lung cancer.
1982	77	Died in her New York City apartment on March 6.

Major Publications:

Year	Age	Major Publications
1936	31	<i>We the Living</i>
1938	33	<i>Anthem</i>
1943	38	<i>The Fountainhead</i>
1957	52	<i>Atlas Shrugged</i>
1961	56	<i>For the New Intellectual</i>
1964	59	<i>The Virtue of Selfishness</i>
1966	61	<i>Capitalism: the Unknown Ideal</i>
1967	62	<i>Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology</i>
1969	64	<i>The Romantic Manifesto</i>
1982	77	<i>Philosophy: Who Needs It?</i>

## Appendix B: Nietzsche's Influence on Ayn Rand

The novels of Ayn Rand embody the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, and even her preserved journal entries reflect a Nietzschean influence. In her personal notes at the end of the play *The Little Street*, she wrote “the secret of life” to herself: “You must be nothing but will... know what you want and do it... all will and all control. Send everything else to hell.”<sup>168</sup> This note provides both a remarkable insight into her internal similarities to Nietzsche and also that she internally retained religious imagery from her Russian Orthodox youth. The underlying point of another play, *The Night of January 16<sup>th</sup>*, was a heroic “sense of life” based on the “Nietzschean idea that the heroic individual must resist ordinary people in order to live as a free man.”<sup>169</sup>

Rand admired Nietzsche's projection of a “magnificent feeling for man's greatness.” Until pulled at the last moment, she had a quote from Nietzsche at the top of her manuscript for her first great work, *The Fountainhead*,<sup>170</sup> that “a noble soul has reverence for itself.”<sup>171</sup> In her working notes for this novel, she described Roark as “the noble soul par excellence.”<sup>172</sup>

Ayn Rand's maternal cousin Vera Guzarchik noted that Ayn Rand reminded her of the prophetic outlaw hero Zarathustra from Nietzsche in the remarkable similarity of their ideas.<sup>173</sup> Nietzsche's work was popular among intellectuals in Russia after the revolution, and Ayn Rand seized upon “his call to discard old values and create new ones, his condemnation of altruism as a slave morality, and his argument for the inviolate rights of a gifted person, whose only obligation is to refine and use his gifts as he sees fit.”<sup>174</sup>

Rand's earlier novels are similar to Nietzsche in that the lower social orders of society often serve as impediments to the advance of the great heroes and that both groups would be better off if the masses were herded by their betters.<sup>175</sup> She articulated in one letter defending individualism against collectivism that “all achievement and progress has been accomplished, not just by men of ability and certainly not by groups of men, but by a struggle between man and mob.”<sup>176</sup>

Undoubtedly Ayn Rand's heroes are “offspring of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, with his poignant superiority to the herd of men.”<sup>177</sup> For example, Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* precisely describes characters such as John Galt and Howard Roark, who are exceptional individuals establishing a new morality for man independent of superstitious reliance on mystical

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>170</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition*, x.

<sup>171</sup> Rolf-Peter Horstmann, ed., and Judith Norman, trans., Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 172.

<sup>172</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition*, 696.

<sup>173</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 42.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 60.

gods.<sup>178</sup> Their “will to power” and love of life shines through the novels as they stand as the epitome, and even saviors, of all humanity. Further, Nietzsche’s “last man” of egalitarian modernity (*der letzte Mensch*) precisely describes the antagonistic characters of Wesley Mouch and Ellsworth M. Toohey, who are tired of life, take no risks, and live off the work of the producers.<sup>179</sup>

Most striking, Ayn Rand herself noted that Nietzsche had an immediate impact on her thinking about the relationship of man to religion. Before Nietzsche, Rand felt she needed to defend all men “no matter how weak or strong,” but for her Zarathustra demonstrated “that it doesn’t have to be collective. In other words, that the species can be vindicated by one man.”<sup>180</sup> In this way, Ayn Rand’s main characters became, in essence, Christ-like.

Rand publicly attempted to distance herself from Nietzsche and claimed philosophical dependence only on Aristotle. With great bluster she expressed her “profound disagreement” with Nietzsche as a “mystic and an irrationalist” living in a “malevolent” universe. Rand also differed from Nietzsche and intentionally distanced herself from his “mystic” view of faith in the introduction to *The Fountainhead*.<sup>181</sup> She also diverged from Nietzsche’s sense of the will to power and understood that some rulers are equally dependent on their subjects as the source of power. In her view, both lead “second-hand lives.”<sup>182</sup> In contrast, Howard Roark does not depend on the masses and waits for those who appreciate his work to come to him.

In many ways, the core elements of Ayn Rand’s philosophy would be indistinguishable from Nietzsche’s to the common reader. For this reason, a better understanding of Nietzsche from a biblical perspective would shed more light on Ayn Rand’s points of biblical consistency or deviation.

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<sup>178</sup> These concepts were first introduced in the book by Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Theophania Publishing, 2011).

<sup>179</sup> Whittaker Chambers, “Big Sister Is Watching You,” *National Review*, December 28, 1957, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/222482/big-sister-watching-you/flashback>; Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 65.

<sup>180</sup> Ayn Rand wrote in a letter, “It is possible that the entire human race, with the exception of me, might become collectivist -- and I will then damn of the whole bunch of them, without damning man as such.” Ayn Rand, *Letters of Ayn Rand*, ed. Michael S. Berliner (New York: Plume, 1997), 212; Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 42.

<sup>181</sup> Rand, *The Fountainhead, Centennial Edition*, x.

<sup>182</sup> Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, 117.