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Individual vs. Society in *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand

Bakalářská práce

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis, titled “Individual vs. Society in *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand” is the result of my own work and that I used only the cited sources.

Prague, May 2nd, 2013

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyse and interpret Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) in order to illustrate her distinct life philosophy called Objectivism. The theoretical part of this thesis focuses on the essence of Ayn Rand's philosophy. It also includes the author's biography and a brief summary of the book, *Atlas Shrugged*. The practical part deals with how the philosophy is presented and dramatised in the book itself.

Key words: Objectivism; epistemology; metaphysics; human nature and ethics; politics

Abstrakt

Cílem této práce je analýza a interpretace románu Ayn Rand *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), a jejím prostřednictvím ukázat autorčinu osobitou životní filosofii zvanou Objektivismus. Teoretická část práce se zaměřuje na podstatu této filosofie a také zahrnuje stručnou biografii autorky. Praktická část se zabývá tím, jakým způsobem je tato filosofie prezentována v rámci její knihy.

Klíčová slova: Objektivismus; epistemologie; metafyzika; lidská povaha a etika; politika

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1. Introduction

According to the Library of Congress, Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* is one of the most influential books that shaped America. [1] Rand's philosophy is influenced by the America's Founding Fathers and preaches freedom of speech and action for everyone. Rand had a chance to compare two absolutely different systems and based all her theories on the conclusions that she withdrew from her experience with differently organised societies, socialism and capitalism. *Atlas Shrugged* represents her philosophy and convictions and illustrates that her theories do not only work on paper but are applicable to real life. Every character she creates serves to represent her ideas and thoughts.

Atlas Shrugged is a very controversial book that has incited many discussions, mainly about what selfishness is and when does the charity end and self-sacrifice begins. It is a book that capitalists take as their guide, and a book that socialists despise of.

The theoretical part of this thesis explains the fundamental concepts of Rand's philosophy, and the second part deals with the concrete situations in the book that display how the theory is to be put into practice. Rand claimed that she herself had lived by the laws of Objectivism and that being guided by reason is the only way of surviving and achieving happiness. In her book, Rand always deals with two extremes and there is always only one correct answer to everything, one way of doing things properly. It is the rational approach since the irrational one always leads to death.

The main aims of this work is to show how the basic principles of Objectivism are illustrated in *Atlas Shrugged* and to compare the two systems that Rand puts in opposition, to see into the characters that Rand creates and try to realise whether they are realistic or not by depicting certain pieces of dialogues from the book and analyzing them.

2. Biography of Ayn Rand

Ayn Rand was born on February 2, 1905 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Her real name was Alissa Rosenbaum. Her parents were both of Jewish origin and had three daughters, Ayn being the eldest of them. Although Rand never denied being Jewish from her early years she considered herself to be an atheist. She rejected any sort of religion. She never believed in any kind of mysticism also.

Rand learned to read when she was six years old and soon after that she discovered a fictional hero in a French magazine for children whose heroic vision sustained her throughout her life. At the age of nine she decided to become a writer. Rand was greatly influenced by such writers as Walter Scott and Victor Hugo. She considered herself to be a European writer, noting: "I decided to be a writer at the age of nine, and everything I have done was integrated to that purpose. I am American by choice and conviction. I was born in Europe, but I came to America because this was the country where one could be fully free to write. I came here alone, after graduating from a European college. I had a difficult struggle, earning my living at odd jobs, until I could make a financial success of my writing. No one helped me, nor did I think at any time it was anyone's duty to help me." [2] She was strongly opposed to collectivism and Russian culture.

In 1917 she witnessed the Bolshevik revolution which resulted in the privatisation of her father's business. This confiscation led her family to experiencing years of near-starvation and poverty.

When at high school she was introduced to American history, she realised that a state where people can be free is possible. America became a model for her. In 1924 Rand has graduated from the University of Petrograd where she had studied history and philosophy. She recalled: "In college, I had taken history as my major subject, and philosophy as my special interest; the first – in order to have factual knowledge of human's past, for my future writing; the second – in order to achieve an objective definition of my values. I found that the first could be learned, but the second had to be done by me." [3] During her study at university she attended some classes in American political history where she learned about the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence, which became the fundamentals for her philosophy. One of the greatest entertainments for Rand during her life in the USSR were Western films and plays. In 1924 she entered the State Institute

for Cinema Arts to study screen-writing.

Ayn Rand obtained permission to leave the USSR for a short visit to America when her distant cousins enabled her to come in 1925. She spent six months with her relatives in Chicago but thought that it was too provincial for her and moved to California to try her hand in screenwriting. A couple of days after her arrival to Hollywood, she met Cecil B. DeMille who gave her a job, first as an extra, then as a screen reader. Very soon after this she met Frank O'Connor, an actor, who became her husband in 1929. She said about him: "I knew what values of character I wanted to find in a man. I met such a man and we have been married for twenty-eight years." [4] They were married until Frank died in 1979.

Nevertheless, it was not so easy to get a writing job, so she had to earn her living working in RKO's wardrobe department and other jobs that had nothing in common with her ambitions for writing. She wrote in her spare time and after several years she sold her first screenplay, *Red Pawn*. Her first stage play was produced in Hollywood and then on Broadway in 1932 and was called *Night of January 16th*.

Rand finished her first novel, *We the Living*, in 1933 but it was rejected by publishers for years for being extremely anti-Soviet. Her next project was *The Fountainhead* (1943), which she wrote while working at studio, reading screenplays for Paramount. There she met Bobbs-Merril, the only publisher who would publish *The Fountainhead*. After two years, the book became a best-seller.

Majority of her fans were students and young people who would send her hundreds of fan letters. Among those fans were Nathan Blumenthal and his future wife, Barbara Wiedmen, who became so close with Ayn Rand that she and her husband followed the two fans to New York where they witnessed Blumenthal and Weidman's wedding in 1953. In 1954 it was revealed that Rand and Blumenthal were engaged in a secret affair. According to Rand sexual attraction goes together with mutual respect for one's ideas, so despite the fact that both were married and twenty-five-year age difference between Rand and Nathan there was no reason for them to avoid getting close. Later, when their relationship ended, Rand found out that he had been keeping secrets from her about his private life, which led her to accusing him of breaking ground principles of Objectivism "irrational behaviour in his private life". [5]

In 1951 Rand was completely devoted to finishing *Atlas Shrugged* which she started in 1946. The book was published in 1957 and is considered to be Ayn's biggest achievement. This book later became an international bestseller and expresses Rand's ideas and philosophy. She said "My personal life is a postscript to my novels; it consists of the sentence: 'And I mean it.' I have always lived by the philosophy I present in my books – and it has worked for me, as it works for my characters. The concretes differ, the abstractions are the same." [6] Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Rand promoted her philosophy, and did not write any fictional works. She lectured on Objectivism at such universities as Yale and Harvard. Some of her essays were later collected and published as books.

She was a heavy smoker and had a surgery for lung cancer . She died of heart failure on March 6, 1982 in New York. Even though she was strongly advocating capitalism, at the end of her life she was signed up for Social Security and Medicare.

She strongly believed in what she was advocating and wrote: "I have held the same philosophy I now hold, for as far back as I can remember. I have learned a great deal through the years and expanded my knowledge of details, of specific issues, of definitions, of applications – and I intend to continue expanding it – but I have never had to change any of my fundamentals. My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of people as heroic beings, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute." [7]

Rand's writing was very much influenced by her experience both in the USSR and the US. She took the first as an example of evil, and the latter as an ideal of good. She always stood by her principles and never doubted herself. She believed that one should live for his own sake, and so she lived her life. She found her happiness as she imagined it.

3. Objectivism

“Ayn Rand named her philosophy 'Objectivism' and described it as a philosophy for living on Earth. Objectivism is an integrated system of thought that defines the abstract principles by which a person must think and act if he or she is to live the life proper to human being.” [8] Ayn Rand's view on the ideal way of living was well presented in her best-selling novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*.

The most distinctive idea of Objectivism is that one should live for the sake of his or her own happiness, not someone else's. However, this does not mean that one is to be disrespectful towards other people. “Objectivism holds that there is no greater moral goal than achieving happiness, but one cannot achieve happiness by wish or whim. Fundamentally, it requires rational respect for the facts of reality, including the facts about our human nature and needs.” [9]

William Thomas, the director of programs for atlas society (an Objectivist research and advocacy organization which promotes Rand's philosophy [10]), wrote that “politically, Objectivists advocate laissez-faire capitalism. Under capitalism, a strictly limited government protects each person's rights to life, liberty, and property and forbids that anyone initiate force against anyone else.” [11] A perfect example of an Objectivist would be a person who is capable of creating new technologies, introduce ideas, creating art, making their own choices, in afterwords person who is depending on his or her own abilities and does not expect others to provide for them, certainly not the ones who live on someone else's allowance.

One of the most important reasons for Ayn Rand's novels to continue to sell well is their optimistic message which holds that anyone could achieve anything and live the life they have always dreamed of, despite of their background and origin.

“At a sales conference at Random House, preceding the publication of *Atlas Shrugged* Rand has presented her philosophy as follows:” [12]

1. “Reality exists as an objective absolute – facts are facts, independent of one's feelings, wishes, hopes or fears” [13] This means that the way you feel about something does not make it that way. If, for example, you do not like a person, it does no make him or her a bad person unless your feelings are based on facts, e.g. the person killed someone.

2. Rand believed that one's only means of obtaining information necessary for one's survival and well-being is reason. "Reason (the faculty which identifies and integrates the material provided by one's senses) is one's only means of perceiving reality, his only source of knowledge, his only guide to action, and his basic means of survival." [14]
3. One does not need another person to make him happy. One should not expect that others will make him happy. The only one who can make you happy is yourself. If helping someone contradicts with your own interests, then there is no reason why you should do this. "One is an end in himself, not the means to the end in others. He must exist for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself. The pursuit of his own rational self-interest and of his own happiness is the highest moral purpose of his life." [15]
4. Rand had a very clear notion of how the state should be arranged politically and economically. She also puts clear boundaries on how far the governmental power should be extended. "The ideal political-economic system is laissez-faire capitalism. It is a system where people deal with one another as traders, by free, voluntary exchange to mutual benefit. The government acts only as a policeman that protects man's rights; it uses physical force only in retaliation and only against those who initiate its use, such as criminals or foreign invaders." [16]
http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_intro

4. Metaphysics

In his article *Ayn Rand's Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Edward Younkens, Professor of Accountancy at Wheeling Jesuit University, explains that "metaphysics is the first philosophical branch of knowledge. At the metaphysical level, Ayn Rand's Objectivism begins with axioms - fundamental truths or irreducible primaries that are self-evident by means of direct perception. Objectivism's three basic philosophical axioms are existence, consciousness, and identity – presuppositions of every concept and every statement." [17] Basically, it means that no claim or statement is regarded to be true unless it is supported by facts.

The concept of existence implies that the world is not affected by what you think about it. Something exists independently of your choice or opinion on it. It does not matter if you choose to ignore the fact that something exists, it will still be there. For example, a fish will live under the water whether or not you believe that that is the case. No matter what you think about the fish, your thoughts will not change its nature. "The concept of existence identifies as basic and unquestionable the fact that something exists; to ask for a cause or explanation of there being something rather than nothing is to misunderstand the place of existence in the hierarchy of concepts." [18]

"The concept of identity identifies the fact that everything that exists is some kind of thing or other – that it has a specific, non-contradictory nature." [19] No matter how you call things, it will not change their nature. Calling a lion an ape would not make it herbivorous. Animals have natural instincts that drive them towards survival. They would not act against their nature, there is no animal that would act in a way that would inevitably bring them death, nor should human beings. According to Rand, you are alive when you are happy. If you are not, you are on your way to death.

Volition is an attribute of one's consciousness and consists in the choice to perceive existence or to evade it. To accept what is metaphysically given is to discover things, perceive existence. Younkins states that "the concept of consciousness identifies the fact that consciousness exists. Rand regards consciousness as inherently relational: to be conscious is to be conscious of something beyond one's own consciousness, and of one's consciousness itself only secondarily." [20] In order to survive human beings need to learn how to use what is metaphysically given in their favour.

Objectivism claims that any religion or belief that is not based on concrete facts but on one's personal feelings or fears is wrong. Therefore, "the task of person's consciousness is to perceive reality, not to create or invent it." [21] Saying that something exists because you feel that there must be something beyond the physical world, or believing in life after death because you fear it, does not make life after death real.

5. Epistemology

According to Ayn Rand, epistemology is a science devoted to the discovery of the proper methods of acquiring and validating knowledge. [22] The only way for a person to acquire knowledge is by observing things around him or her and making the right conclusions, not by making things up and claiming that they are true because he or she feels that way. Younkens notes that "epistemology refers to the nature and starting point of knowledge, with the nature and correct exercise of reason, with reason's connection to the senses and perception, with the possibility of other sources of knowledge." [23] Facts are the only things on which you should base your theories.

In contrast to animals that have instincts, people do not reason automatically. What they call free will is our freedom to make choices, to decide in what to believe, what course of life to take in order to achieve success, prosperity and happiness. "Objectivism holds that all human knowledge is reached through reason, the human mental faculty of understanding the world abstractly and logically." [24] The only way for a person to make the right choice is to make it by himself, because the process of abstract thinking is often quite complicated and humans are very easily mistaken. "The ability to grasp reality in the form of abstract concepts and principles is the essence of reason as a human capacity." [25]

Objectivism rejects skepticism which claims that no true ideas or opinions exist due to different circumstances under which one might find oneself. The followers of Objectivism believe that someone who claims that no real knowledge is possible is asking you to abandon your mind. [26] The kind of thinking that allows us to formulate true ideas is the one where people are objective. "To be objective, people must know how to define the terms they use (so they know what they mean), base their conclusions on observable facts (so their beliefs are anchored in reality) and employ the principles of logic (so they can reliably reach sound conclusions)." [27]

Younkens explains that epistemology exists because people are limited beings who learn in disjointed incremental steps and who therefore require a proper procedure to acquire the knowledge necessary to act, survive, and flourish. [28] It is necessary for people to realise that the knowledge they acquire is vital for their wellbeing, therefore one must be guided by reason, and not mislead himself or herself with beliefs. The science of

epistemology would not exist if human knowledge was automatic and absolute. Throughout a human life one must learn to distinguish truth from deceit and apply this knowledge to one's way of living in order to survive.

6. Human Nature and Ethics

Human nature is one of the most important issues of the Objectivism. Ayn Rand believed that rational selfishness is the ultimate expression of human nature. In her book, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, Rand gives the exact meaning and dictionary definition of the word “selfishness”, which is concerned with one's own interests. [29] Each living creature is initially concerned with its own life, therefore Rand concludes that selfishness is the right moral value of human's life. [30]

A morality of rational selfishness enables people to achieve ultimate happiness, which is the primary goal of every human being. Many might argue that selfishness is a negative trait of character, but what Rand in fact means is that success and prosperity should be achieved by one's own virtue, and not be expected from someone else.

In an objectivist society people should not hinder one another in achieving their aims, because when one does not offer, nor does he expect help from the others, any form of disappointment is excluded. When a person relies on his or her own abilities, there is no one to blame if something goes wrong. In the same way, there is no one to thank but yourself if everything works out the way you planned for it. In one of his articles, William Thomas explains that a harmony of interests exists among rational individuals, so that no one's benefit need come at the price of suffering. As one person's happiness does not come at the expense of other's, a life of mutual respect and benevolent independence is possible for all. [31]

Ayn Rand defines ethics as a code of values to guide one's choices and actions. [32] Every person during his or her life defines a code of values that he or she therefore follows. “The objectivist ethics holds that human life as the standard of value – and his own life as the ethical purpose of every individual person.” [33] If your actions do more harm to you, and you do not benefit from them, you choose the opposite of life and happiness, which is suffering and death.

Rand explains that one must choose his or her actions, values and goals by the standard of

that which is proper to a human – in order to achieve, maintain, fulfill and enjoy that ultimate value, that end in itself, which is his or her own life. She also says that productive work is the central purpose of a rational person's life, the central value that integrates and determines the hierarchy of all his other values. Reason is the source, the precondition of his productive work – pride is the result. [34]

7. Politics

Ayn Rand holds to the opinion that no one has the right to seek values from others by means of physical force. The only case in which one has the right to use force is when it is self-defense and only against those who initiate it first. According to Rand, the only economic system that enables people to trade and get mutual benefit without using force and violence is laissez-faire capitalism. [35]

In his article *The Objectivist view of Law And Government*, William Thomas states that the Objectivist political theory has three main elements. "First, the foundation of the political system should be the fundamental right to live free from physical force." [36] The basic role of the government is to guarantee safety to the society, to punish those who initiate physical force. In no case should the government somehow restrict people's freedom or take control over people's earnings. "Second, government has the strictly limited function of protecting rights." [37] This means that the only governmental institutions necessary for the society are courts, police and a system of legislation. Each one of these institutions exist in order to protect people from violence. "Third, governmental power should be exercised in accordance with objective laws." [38] Objective laws are laws that are based on rights. Objective laws are those which provide just, and peaceful means of resolving conflicts among manufacturers and merchants. Capitalism is a politico-economic system implied by these principles. [39]

It is important for the government to use its power in order to protect people, and not misapply this power. As people are easily manipulated, it is crucial to make sure that the power entrusted to the government is not used against people's freedom, but solely to protect their freedom. William Thomas therefore explains that "objectivism advocates a strictly limited form of government: a republican system that has only those powers and takes only those actions required to secure our rights to freedom from force." [40]

As has already been mentioned, Ayn Rand considers capitalism to be the only just economic system that enables people to trade freely and benefit from their diligence. Some might argue that it is a system that favours big businesses but in its pure form capitalism, on the contrary, is "a social system characterized by individual freedom." [41] It is the only system that enables poor people to become rich by using their own abilities, and not by asking others for help. Because Rand believes that there are no external forces that might prevent you from reaching your goal, and rejected the statement that we are what the society made us, it is only the matter of having the right political and economic system. Thomas expresses a similar thought, saying that "capitalism is the system under which each of us makes his own choices and must take responsibility for his own life and happiness. It is the system in which long-term peace and unbounded prosperity are possible, if people will work for them." [42]

Ayn Rand also mentions that there should be a complete separation of the economy and government. There should be no regulations made. As she said, "it is the system of separation of economy and state, just as there is separation of the church and state, and for the same essential reason: because each person has a right to live as his own conscience dictates, and because we all benefit from everyone having that freedom." [43] The economy exists independantly from the state just as religion does, and for the same reasons.

Ayn Rand has developed a completely new philosophy by following which, according to her, one reaches happiness in life. This philosophy covers a wide range of aspects of people's lives and gives guidance which one should follow in order to achieve success and happiness and avoid suffering. Clear directions are given on how to organise one's thoughts and make the right conclusions, including the way in which society should be organised. The most important principle of objectivism is that one must be primarily concerned with his or her own happiness and well-being.

8. Atlas Shrugged Summary

The novel opens with Eddie Willers, a special assistant to the vice president of Taggart Transcontinental (the biggest railroad in the US), walking towards his office in New York. On his way he is interrupted by a homeless man who says "Who is John Galt?" Eddie gives the man a dime and continues walking but is now concerned with the man's question, that he has been hearing everywhere for the last couple of years. The phrase is a reference to all that is unknown, it can be compared to the phrase "Who knows?" or other similar questions that do not require an answer but refer to the impossibility of knowing.

When Eddie arrives in the office he is having a conversation with the main protagonist, Dagny Taggart, the Operating Vice President of Taggart Transcontinental which was originally funded by her grandfather and is now officially run by her brother Jim. Despite being siblings, Dagny and Jim are completely different people. Dagny is hard-working and does everything to keep the company afloat, whereas Jim always relies on his friends to get him the necessary materials and help with managing various breakdowns on the railroad. This time it is his friend, Boyle, who does not seem to make any effort in delivering the steel. Eddie and Dagny are trying to convince Jim to use the new metal which was invented by a big businessman, Hank Rearden to fix a vital Rio Norte Line.

The times are especially difficult because of the bad economy which is marked by collectivism and statism. The novel takes place in the 1950s, so no one would choose Dagny to be the president of the company, even though everyone knows that all the decisions are made by her and not her brother who is scared of taking responsibility for his actions. Dagny succeeded in persuading Jim to buy a new metal which is the best on the market rather than waiting for Boyle who had been delaying the delivery of the rail for the last six months, and says that she will take complete responsibility for that. Similar actions are done throughout the book. As this unfolds, Dagny finds out that her childhood friend and first love, Francisco d'Anconia, whom she knew as a very intelligent man, has become a playboy and is ruining his international copper family company.

Hank Rearden is a man of great integrity, a self-made industrialist who has invented a new metal, the instructions to which he decided to keep secret. Because of this, the competitors get jealous. Hank's metal is much cheaper and stronger than steel. To save the other companies from becoming bankrupt, the government makes a false claim that

Rearden's metal is not safe and needs further testing. Rearden's life is complicated by his family. His mother, brother and wife are constantly accusing him of being selfish and spending too much time at work. His mother's only concern is his younger brother who has never worked in his life and constantly talks about helping people who are in need, but would do nothing to earn the money himself. His wife is a frigid woman who does not share Hank's interests. All these people are on his allowance.

Meanwhile, the government is led by Wesley Mouch who initially worked for Rearden but then betrayed him. He and other looters are doing everything to prevent people from building successful, free-market businesses.

The reader also becomes acquainted with Ellis Wyatt, the founder of enterprise Wyatt Oil, who is, like Dagny and Hank, a very successful young man and wants to build his business free of the government control.

The government continues to influence big businesses by passing more laws and regulations, charging bigger taxes. People start to notice that the economy worsens but their only reaction to this is the same question that requires no answer: "Who is John Galt?"

Dagny starts noticing that the founders of the biggest and most successful companies start disappearing, leaving their businesses to an inevitable crash. At first, it seems impossible to her, she does not understand why would people who have spent all their lives trying to achieve success just abandon work of their lives. Before Ellis Wyatt disappeared, he set his biggest oil well on fire. No matter how hard the government tries to find the missing businessmen they fail, and the realisation that they cannot handle the businesses nor can they produce anything, comes to their minds. They pass regulations that force people to stay at their jobs, no one is allowed to quit now.

In a romantic subplot, Hank and Dagny fall in love. In the book, hard-working people with purpose in life are very rare. Hank and Dagny's love is based on mutual respect, they have the same values, same concept of life, which makes their love sacred. Even though Hank is married to another woman, he goes on vacation with Dagny (both have not had a break from work for years). They decide to travel by car, and during this trip they discover an incomplete motor that transfers atmospheric static electricity into kinetic energy. The significance of this discovery makes Dagny to do everything possible to find the inventor of the motor.

While she is trying to find the inventor of the motor, she is hiring a scientist who is trying to restore the motor and make it work again. She is also trying to find out where all the important people have gone and why they keep disappearing. The scientist she hired works in Utah, and one time when she comes to visit him she is told that the man she wants to see left a couple of minutes before with a mysterious man. Dagny follows the plane with the scientist in it but it disappears among the mountains and by trying to find it Dagny crash-lands through a “ray-screen” used to hide Galt's Gauch – a hidden valley where all the man who disappeared have been brought by John Galt. John has explained to Dagny that he has helped all of them to realise how pointless their work was when controlled by the government which exploited their abilities and minds, and the point of them hiding is to show the world that it cannot survive without the productive members of the society, but they can survive without the others.

Even though Dagny realises the inanity of her work, she is still unable to leave her railroad to an inevitable destruction. She leaves the valley and comes back to New York. John Galt follows her and they fall in love. She finds out that John has been working for her railroad as a laborer for the last couple of years. Galt hacks to a national broadcast and delivers a speech, in which he explains how the world is going to cease to exist without people like him, and how foolish the government has been trying to steal from them.

Meanwhile, the people in the government realise that they are doomed and decide to kidnap Galt and force him to help them. However, Galt is rescued by a group of friends. They fly away and see that the lights of New York are going out, which means that their mission is completed.

The novel closes with Galt announcing to the people who live in the valley that they will return to the world.

9. History of creating *Atlas Shrugged* and its criticism

Atlas Shrugged is a novel written by Ayn Rand in 1957 in the United States of America. The genre is not monosematic, the book includes elements of romance, mystery and science fiction. It is Rand's longest novel in which she expresses her ideas and shows how the theory of her philosophy, Objectivism, should work in practise.

The title of the book is a reference to a Titan of Greek mythology who holds the world on his shoulders without asking for anything in return. Atlas is a parallel to the main protagonists in the book who are, as Rand calls them, the “motor of the world”. Unfortunately, people take them for granted and do not appreciate their work. The industrialists, people of great mind, who have achieved everything by themselves, who have earned every single penny they own are being bullied by the rest of the world who claim to be less lucky but just as capable of creating and managing businesses if ever being given a chance. While the hard-working people are trying to keep the world afloat, the looters are trying to control every single step the businessmen are taking by passing more regulations in order to get more of their money. Rand makes it quite clear why the novel was given this title when she includes in it a dialogue between two successful men, Hank Rearden and Francisco d'Anconia:

'Mr. Rearden,' said Francisco, his voice solemnly calm, 'if you saw Atlas, the giant who holds the world on his shoulders, if you saw that he stood, blood running down his chest, his knees buckling, his arms trembling but still trying to hold the world aloft with the last of his strength, and the greater his effort the heavier the world bore down upon his shoulders—what would you tell him to do?'

'I . . . don't know. What . . . could he do? What would you tell him?'

'To shrug.' [44]

Basically, the whole idea of the book is to show what would happen to the world if all the creative minds went on strike. For this purpose, Ayn creates a character who realises the futility of working under the watch of the looters and decides to show to other people like himself how pointless their struggle to make a living is. His name is John Galt. He helps people to understand how they could really change the world instead of attempting to survive in conditions that are impossible to live under. There is a dialogue in the book between Dagny Taggart and Hank Rearden where they talk about how they could just

abandon people like Jim Taggart and Hank's family, which means to leave those people behind and never worry about them again, stop supporting them and covering their mistakes. Dagny wonders why would not they do that, and Hank replies that they are keeping them afloat simply because they can. By the end of the book it becomes clear to both of them that tolerating looters was their crucial mistake.

Ayn Rand once said that Dagny Taggart represents her idea of a perfect woman: "Dagny was myself with any possible flaws eliminated. Myself without—if you ask me which flaws, to name consciously—without my tiredness, without my chronic, slightly anti-material feeling, you know, that which I consider in me the ivory tower I want, or the theoretician versus the man of action. It would be myself without a moment of exhaustion." [45] Dagny Taggart is indeed a person of action, from time to time in the book she does not sleep for a couple of days but is still able to stay calm and make decisions. Writers are not usually seen as people of action but rather theoretics. They think they know how to live but they show it to the world through fiction, unlike John Galt, for example, who took everything into his hands and actually showed the world what had to be done.

Every single character created by Rand has its own purpose. Her characters are divided into two opposite sides. One side is good, and the other one is evil. Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, John Galt all represent people who live rationally, they weigh their actions and are capable of foreseeing the future steps and avoiding conflicts. Jim Taggart, Wesley Mouch, Hank's family and other looters represent people who rely on their feelings and reject to admit the facts, they feel that they are underprivileged and more successful people owe them help and respect for being unlucky. Almost all of these characters are flat, there is no development of them shown throughout the book. Just like Rand herself, they only develop their ideas but do not change the fundamentals. The businessmen never doubt their actions and their right to earn and live for their own merit. None of the looters ever realises that he or she may be wrong. Even when they see the whole world falling apart, their first instinct is to force Galt to save them, not to admit that the system they were trying to build is not working. Galt, in his speech on the radio says: "There are two sides to every issue: One side is right and the other is wrong, but the middle is always evil." [46] However, this stability of the characters might be seen as a good thing, because, as has already been mentioned earlier, during her life, Rand has not changed her philosophy or beliefs herself, so her creating stable characters might be a

way of showing that strong people who stay by their thoughts and actions do exist and are to be glorified.

Rand said about her book: “Atlas started with a plot idea. The first step was to project, in a generalized way, the philosophical progression of what would be needed, what kind of man or characters would be needed to carry a story of that kind. So that the characters then came out of the philosophical issues involved and the generalized nature of the plot.” [47] For the reason that the book is mainly aimed to display the fundamental principles of Rand's philosophy, the characters had to represent her ideals. Not every person is so devoted to work or just as hard-working to do what the main characters in *Atlas Shrugged* are willing to do in order to prevent their companies from collapsing.

Even though the book is a great success in the United States and used to be a bestseller, not all ideas represented in it are being taken seriously. Many businessmen and capitalists in America have made this book their guide to creating a better society. In the novel the nation's most innovative entrepreneurs and business leaders have departed for “Galt's Gulch”, a secret society formed to show how much the world needs pure capitalism. This idea has inspired many politicians, and some have even made *Atlas Shrugged* a required reading for their staff. Unfortunately, some of the ideas are not as attractive and univocal. Rand preaches atheism and celebrates an adulterous relationship between Dagny and Hank. These two aspects have driven many of Ayn's fans away from her philosophy.

Rand mostly preaches reason and rationalism, and has created her story in order to show how life of an individual could become better if he or she would be guided by their own moral values, by making their own decisions. However, some critics in the 1957 responded very negatively to Rand's novel. For instance, Robert R. Kirsch from the *Los Angeles Times* said that the book was probably the worst piece of large fiction written by Rand. According to him, Rand wrote in the breathless hyperbole of soap opera, that the characters were unrealistic, the situations were incredible and illogical, and the whole story was feverishly imaginative. [48] Granville Hicks, from the *New York Times* accuses the novel of having only two moods, the melodramatic and the didactic, and in both it knows no bounds. [49]

Not only negative reviews were given to Rand's novel. Despite the fact that the book has little literary value (the language is plain, not creative and the story is quite simple, some might call it the lower genre), it expresses some of the author's deep ideas. For example,

Paul Jordan-Smith, from Angeles Times thought that *Atlas Shrugged* is “a book every businessman should hug to his breast, and the first novel I recall to glorify the dollar mark and the virtue in profit.... But how the shabby little left-wingers are going to hate it!” Which is true, because Ayn Rand's ideas go completely against left-wingers. [50]

Ayn Rand's values are presented in the book by the dialogues of her characters. Every monologue, every speech carries the purpose of introducing the reader to fresh ideas of Objectivism. The characters have each a distinct approach to different topics like property rights, the role of the government, sex and, most importantly, individualism.

10. Sanction of Victim

Leonard Peikoff, a friend and a big fan of Ayn Rand's ideas, has written books where he has put the main ideas of Objectivism that he has gathered from thirty years of talking to Rand. He has studied her philosophy closely and defined some of her terms. He has defined the concept of the victim as “the willingness of the good to suffer at the hands of the evil, to accept the role of sacrificial victim for the 'sin of creating values’”. [51]

Rand claims that evil is nothing else but a parasite, and may only exist when good people tolerate it. There are many characters in the book who question the way the society is organised but they do not quite understand what is wrong and how to fix it. For example, Hank Rearden takes care of his family because he feels obliged. The only argument his mother can give to him is that they are bound by the ties of blood, and that this should be enough for him to support them without questioning. In order to get the reader acquainted with Hank's family, Rand describes a situation that normally takes place when he comes home. Rearden, the breadwinner, is the only person in the family who works but when he comes home his relatives start complaining and accusing him of being selfish, not caring enough. He wants them to take some interest in his life and work but all he gets are accusations. They say that what they want of him is not money but time and warmth but he feels that they have no common interests, so there is no point in spending time together. His brother pretends to care about the poor and asks Hank to give him money whenever he gets the chance. Rearden agrees to write him a cheque to give money to homeless people, but his brother says that if he is to write a cheque, there should be no Hank's name on it, because his friends consider him a careless industrialist whose only

goal in life is to earn money for himself.

His mother's only interest seems to be Hank's younger brother. She asks Hank to give his brother a job, so that he does not feel indebted. She wants a kind of job for him where he would not have to do much work but would get a lot of money. To this Rearden says no, because he has no use there for useless people like his brother, people who act according to their feelings, who have no ambitions and who would rather work with people who are their friends than those who are most suitable for the job.

Hank is clearly just a victim of his own beliefs that because these people are his relatives, they are entitled to treat him in whatever way they want. Later on he realises that this was his mistake that he allowed them to think that he has an obligation to take care of them. They insult him, and in return he tries to understand what it is that they want from him. They tell him that he is evil and selfish because he earns his living, and he does not try to prove them wrong.

Rand includes a dialogue at a party on the occasion of Hank and his wife's, Lillian, wedding anniversary between Rearden and d'Anconia.

Rearden asked, his voice low with a sound which was almost a threat, 'What are you trying to do?'

'I am calling your attention to the nature of those for whom you are working.'

'It would take a man who's never done an honest day's work in his life, to think or say that.' The contempt in Rearden's voice had a note of relief. 'You wouldn't understand it if I told you that the man who works, works for himself, even if he does carry the whole wretched bunch of you along. Now I'll guess what you're thinking: go ahead, say that it's evil, that I'm selfish, conceited, heartless, cruel. I am. I don't want any part of that tripe about working for others. I'm not.'

'The only thing that's wrong in what you said,' Francisco answered, 'is that you permit anyone to call it evil.' In Rearden's pause of incredulous silence, he pointed at the crowd in the drawing room. 'Why are you willing to carry them?'

'Because they're a bunch of miserable children who struggle to remain alive, desperately and very badly, while I—I don't even notice the burden,' [52]

It is obvious from this dialogue that should Hank want to stop supporting his family, he could do it any time but instead of that he is letting them have a carefree life. He could have taught his brother a lesson by stopping giving him the allowance but he would not do it because the society is saying that he is the enemy, and his brother is a victim. Hank is an individual who is suffering but his suffering is a result of his not being certain enough of his righteousness. His family are parasites, and he lets them suck the blood out of him.

One can see the same behaviour from Dagny Taggart who would let her brother take credit for her ideas. For instance, when he insists on building a line in South America, knowing that most likely it will not bring the railroad any profit, she agrees to this idea of his. He claims that sometimes the needs of people are more important than making money. His main reason for building the line, he claims, is to help the people of Mexico, ease their way through the country and help them to develop their industries. He wants people to love him for being human and generous, whereas Dagny realises that the state of Mexico is going to privatise their line and removes everything of value from the San Sebastian Line. She lets her brother take the credit for it, because for her it is more important that the company is prosperous, not to see her face in the newspapers.

The main point is that even though Jim and Hank's brother say that they want to help people, but they destroy their businesses. Jim's railroad is the biggest railroad in the United States, and should it go bankrupt, people will be left without transportation, which means that there would be no means of delivering food to different cities and would result in starvation.

Dagny lets Jim have his railroad because she thinks she can handle it and straighten everything but in fact his mistakes become more and more difficult to correct. If one lets a child scream in public once, it becomes more difficult to explain to the child that he or she should not do it again and behave well later. Dagny and Hank allow their families to spoil their lives, so they should not be surprised when things go out of control and they are threatened and betrayed by their own relatives who preached brotherhood and self-sacrifice. People like Jim should not be treated as equals but as children who must face their punishment in order to realise the mistake they have made.

Dagny and Hank's main goal in life may be earning money but their goal cooperates with people's main purpose, which is to survive. Their companies provide working places, they

come up with new ideas which will eventually be useful for people, like new kind of metal which gives many opportunities, makes simple things like forks cheap and even more available. They are driven by a rational desire to make their products the best on the market. Jim Taggart, however, is driven by a desire to make friends and be admired by the society. He does not care if he destroys his railroad as long as he has money himself and might be called generous. The problem is that by destroying the railroad would cost hundreds of men their jobs, which no one is going to thank him for.

He thinks that he is a victim of circumstances, that if something goes wrong it is a result of bad luck. He never takes responsibility for his actions. Even when Dagny warns him that he is about to do the wrong thing, he thinks that she is mean and cold. He is a victim of circumstances, and Dagny is a victim of her own weakness, her unwillingness to realise that her brother is much bigger threat than she thinks he is. When she and Hank tolerate the behavior of their relatives they make themselves unhappy, because instead of thanking them and obeying, their relatives show disrespect and constantly try to prove them wrong. They are unhappy because the society turned their back at them, and they are being constantly accused of selfishness.

11. Politics in *Atlas Shrugged*

In his book *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, Leonard Peikoff affirms that “[p]olitics, like ethics, is a normative branch of philosophy. Politics defines the principles of a proper social system, including the proper functions of government. Living in society is a value to man if it is the right kind of society. The wrong kind, like any wrong course of action, is a threat to man, and can be fatal.” [53] As has already been mentioned earlier, Rand believes that the government should have very limited power and apply its force solely to protect its citizens from external intruders or violence. In her book, *Atlas Shrugged*, she proves that there are only three governmental institutions necessary by contradiction.

She depicts a society where the government has a lot of institutions, and tries to control every aspect of human life. Not only does it result in violation of human rights, but also cripples the whole system and completely destroys country's wealth. Peikoff, explaining the principle of politics, notes that “[t]he basic principle of politics, according to

Objectivism, is the principle endorsed by America's Founding Father's: individual rights.”, and defining individual rights as “the means of subordinating society to moral law.” [54] If every individual is guided by his or her moral values, and at the same time does not breach the freedom of action of another individual, there would be no need for all the regulations and endless laws that are being passed by the government even in real life.

Moreover, Rand believes that the larger the size of the government is, the more corrupt it becomes. She shows that the amount of institutions created by the looters in *Atlas Shrugged* exceeds any standards which leads to confusion and bureaucracy. The main goal of the politicians becomes to benefit from the industrialists and not their primary task which is to protect society. When the government starts controlling every step of the capitalists by forbidding to trade freely, they deteriorate the quality of life and set back the development of new technologies. The laws they pass serve to limit the rights of people who invented something new and want to benefit from it. The grounds on which the laws are being passed are dictated by the principle “you scratch my back, and I scratch yours.” The looters are trading favours instead of goods to each other. For instance, when Jim Taggart says to his friends in the government that his business is in danger because his competitor, Dan Conway, is stealing away all his clients in Colorado, they pass a law called “Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule”, which is passed in order to prevent competition between the railroads in certain parts of the country. What Jim fails to mention is that Dan Conway actually provides a better service but knowing that Taggart Transcontinental will not survive a healthy competition, Jim seeks another way of dealing with the problem. However, in return for this favour Jim promises to buy steel for his railroad from Orren Boyle. The problem in this kind of trade is that it does not solve the problem but only temporarily freezes it. In fact, problems of this kind have a snowball effect which strikes later but much harder. After this deal is made, Boyle is unable to provide the necessary steel, which means that Jim cannot fix the railroad, which leads to the lack of transportation in the country.

Another similar example is introduced when by request of an important politician all the trains of Taggart Transcontinental are sent to collect the harvest of soybeans, which were harvested too early, instead of collecting harvest of the crops from Minnesota. As a result, the crops harvest got rotten and the soybeans were not edible. This led to country's food supply being destroyed. This is a perfect example of fatal consequences caused by a wrong governance.

The fact that enables the looters to benefit from the industrialists is that hard-working men like Hank and Dagny are so determined to keep their businesses afloat that they would do anything and agree to any conditions. When the looters realise, however, that they have exhausted the limit of patience of the capitalists, and a lot of them started to disappear, abandoning works of their lifetimes, they pass a law that makes the whole country suffer. They issue a Directive 10-289, which is a set of laws that is supposed to prevent the economy from further decline. The Directive states that anyone who abandons their work or quits is to be put in prison. Not only do men start disappearing the next day but even if everyone had remained in their positions, it would harm the economic progress. Hard-working and capable people are to be spotted and promoted, not left at the bottoms where they start just after they finish universities or other institutions. This is one of the ways in which they stop the economy and society from developing.

Another way is when they try to influence an individual. Hank Rearden is right to think that he is free to use his metal in whatever way he wishes. If he thinks that he will gain most benefit from selling it to particular industrialists because his main goal is to make money, he should be free to do so. Unfortunately, just like in the real world, not all will benefit from this new invention. For instance, if a car that works solely on water would be invented, there would be no need for oil anymore. A lot of companies and factories will go out of business and rich men who own those mines would do anything to stop this invention from coming to the market. Obviously, the society would benefit from it but usually it is people in the government who control things of this kind.

The same tendency may be noticed in *Atlas Shrugged*. The new metal possesses such qualities as solidity, durability and, most importantly, it is much cheaper to produce than steel or any other kind of metal. It can not only be used to build bridges and railroads, but also to make an infinite number of small goods like forks and metal cages etc. Naturally, the owners of steel mines are not happy with this, as they know they will probably lose their jobs. By all means they are trying to stop this product from being on the market.

First of all, they pull their strings in the government and the government-run laboratory, the State Science Institute, prints an article aimed to destroy the reputation of the metal. With no scientific proof they claim that the metal is unstable and dangerous to use for constructions like a bridge (Taggart Transcontinental is about to build a bridge in Colorado out of this metal). The public is horrified by the perspective of falling into abyss when crossing the bridge and the metal becomes terribly unpopular.

The State Science Institute is directed by Robert Stadler who tells Dagny that this article was printed because Rearden's invention means destruction for the Institute. The metallurgical department has not made a discovery or a mere development in its field of study for years. If people were to know that their taxes are being given to an institution that is unable to provide any improvement, the government would stop supporting the research and its employees would lose their jobs. One may safely argue that what Rand implies is that the state institutions are not to be created at all. The employees know that they are being supported by the government, which means that whatever happens they will not lose their jobs. On the contrary, Rearden knows that success of his industry depends on whether he is capable of providing the best products, so he makes much more effort.

It is vital to add that by the end of the book the looters do not try to hide their intentions from the capitalists. Floyd Ferris, one of the managing directors of the State Science Institute confesses to Hank that the purpose of passing the laws is not to improve the life of people but to make them controllable:

There's no way to rule innocent men. The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws. Who wants a nation of law-abiding citizens? What's there in that for anyone? But just pass the kind of laws that can neither be observed nor enforced nor objectively interpreted—and you create a nation of law-breakers—and then you cash in on guilt. Now that's the system, Mr. Rearden, that's the game, and once you understand it, you'll be much easier to deal with. [55]

Rand's idea of a civilized society is quite clear:

It is only by means of physical force that one man can deprive another of his life, or enslave him, or rob him, or prevent him from pursuing his own goals, or

compel him to act against his own rational judgment. The precondition of a civilized society is the barring of physical force from social relationships—thus establishing the principle that if men wish to deal with one another, they may do so only by means of *reason*: by discussion, persuasion and voluntary, uncoerced agreement. [56]

The further the government goes in making laws and watching over everything, trying to gain merit from people who make money, the more radical actions they are forced to undertake. The last major project they make is not a law or a rule but a whole machine developed in the State Science Institute. The money common people pay were directed to creating a device that would help the government to take control over everything. They call it the “instrument of peace”. It is a device that is capable of destroying everything within miles using sound waves. This illustrates how money in the hands of people who have limitless power can cause the creation of a fatal device.

12. Capitalism vs. Socialism in *Atlas Shrugged*

Politics and economics are very closely related. As Peikoff remarks: “Politics is to economics as mind is to body, or as an abstraction is to one of its concretes. ... Morality determines politics, as its application to organized human interaction – and politics then determines economics, as its application to the field of production and trade.” [57] In the elections people usually vote for a party that represents not only their political but also economic views. Some people vote for improvement of social services, free hospitals and so on. Others think it is best if they did not pay the taxes but would rather pay for their own private insurance. Many hard-working people and businessmen complain that their money goes to some slacker who is in full capacity to work but, because he or she gets support from the government, there is no need for him or her to do any work. Such people are represented by Hank's brother who did not do anything because he knew that he can count on Hank to provide for him. In their opinion, if he was left alone, he would simply be forced to find a job, even if it is not a very prestigious one. The same applies to most people. Nowadays, in England, for example, one may hear people say that English people do not want to take jobs like cleaning the toilets but would rather leave it to the immigrants. Those people live out of governmental welfare but if one day the government would stop giving them money, they would take any job just to feed themselves. This way

of thinking, however, does not take into account the fact that some people might have personal problems that unable them to go to work or in religious families, for example, women are very often forced to stay at home.

Rand insists on the fact that “the free market represents the social application of an objective theory of values.” [58] In *Atlas Shrugged* she indicates the two economic systems, socialism and capitalism, with which she was personally acquainted.

Capitalism is represented by Galt's Gulch where people trade freely and are not afraid of competition. In fact, they know that healthy competition leads to development of the technologies and society and everyone benefits from it. It is illustrated when one of the businesses goes out of market because a better system of taking coal has been introduced. The person whose business was destroyed does not take it as a disaster though but as an opportunity to work for a man who has a more inventive mind and has come up with this new method. It is generally regarded that industrialists or owners of big companies keep all the money they own, and therefore it would not harm them if they were to pay higher taxes than ordinary people. In fact, in most cases this money is spent on research and further development of the product, in order to stay competent and be able to withstand the competition. In her book, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, Rand explains the basic principle of the free market: “Within every category of goods and services offered on a free market, it is the purveyor of the best product at the cheapest price who wins the greatest financial rewards in that field—not automatically nor immediately nor by fiat, but by virtue of the free market, which teaches every participant to look for the objective best within the category of his own competence, and penalizes those who act on irrational considerations.” [59] Free market is what enables one to choose products which suit his or her needs best.

Socialism is represented by a company, the Twentieth Century Motor Company, that used to be very prosperous until its founder died and it was inherited by his children who decided to try to manage the company in a completely different way under the motto “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” [60] This idea resembles The Soviet union very much. The problem with this kind of philosophy is that no one really knows or can decide whose needs are more important or who is more capable. It results in a complete chaos because people who worked and earned their money were forced to give it to those who were in need, even when the need was not as important. It resulted in people pretending to be less capable than they really are, more ill

or tired. No one wanted to work extra shifts and did not see any result from their work. The quality of the motors significantly declined and the name that once was a guarantee of a good product became a sign of a terrible work. People are much more likely to work hard when they do it for themselves, for their own profit. They need to see results of their work, whether it is to purchase a new sofa or a new house. One always works better when he knows the outcome and is motivated by his own dreams. Motivation is a much better driving force than the fear of pain or being punished.

Ayn Rand does not permit any compromise when it comes to economy. The only right and good system in her opinion is laissez-faire capitalism, which has never been introduced in real life without combining it with some other system. In her opinion everything leads either to prosperity or to distraction. Socialism leads to fatal consequences, as illustrated in the case of The Twentieth Century Motor Company. Capitalism, on the contrary, leads to financial stability and welfare.

13. Personal Relationships in *Atlas Shrugged*

Even though in *Atlas Shrugged* Ayn Rand mostly concentrates on social and economic problems, she also touches upon the subject of personal relationships. She approaches relationships just like any other kind of trade. According to her, one should choose a life partner or even a friend rationally. First, one should establish what qualities one is looking for in a person. Rand considers happiness to be one's highest goal, and regards a life where one is not happy to be a life that is not worth living. Because our knowledge is not automatic, one should apply reason in order to grasp what will make him or her happy.

When looking at Rand's biography one may realise that she herself lived by this rule, and her personal life was based on her philosophy. Her comment on how she feels about her husband makes it quite clear that the decision to get married to this particular man was not made spontaneously. She knew exactly what qualities would make her happy and satisfied. She found the man who met her criteria. To her the success of a relationship lies within the mutual respect of people engaged into this relationship. What they should share are views and ideology. If two people are to have the similar approach to life and share goals they are most likely to feel sexual affection as well, regardless of their age and looks. Rand herself was engaged in this kind of relationship, which was based on

similarity of opinions and respect. This act was committed with her husband's consent.

In a relationship there is no space for self-sacrifice. If one, for example, goes to the shop to buy a sofa, he knows what colour and design of sofa he or she wants because he or she knows what colour his or her walls are. He or she will most likely not buy a sofa that is made of worse material simply because it was made by a poor family who are in need for money. One will buy a sofa that suits the interior of his or her house best. The same principle may be applied to the choice of a person one is to fall in love with. According to Rand, the person we fall in love with is a mirror of our own desires and flaws. One's partner reflects one's inner self.

Just like when people's purpose when they trade is to gain something from this trade, the relationship should result in mutual benefit. One should not feel guilty when breaking up with someone because it would be irrational to sacrifice one's happiness. In Rand's understanding, to sacrifice one's happiness means to sacrifice one's life.

Francisco explains this theory to Hank when Rearden comes to visit him: "Well, the man who despises himself tries to gain self-esteem from sexual adventures—which can't be done, because sex is not the cause, but an effect and an expression of a man's sense of his own value." [61] d'Anconia means that if a person has an inferior complex, he is more likely to look for comfort and try to elevate his self-esteem with a lot of different women. However, if a person is confident, he or she knows exactly who they need. He adds:

They think that your body creates a desire and makes a choice for you—just about in some such way as if iron ore transformed itself into railroad rails of its own volition. Love is blind, they say; sex is impervious to reason and mocks the power of all philosophers. But, in fact, a man's sexual choice is the result and the sum of his fundamental convictions. Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life. Observe the ugly mess which most men make of their sex lives—and observe the mess of contradictions which they hold as their moral philosophy. [62]

Not only does it mean that love is irrational, but that it should be seen just like any other aspect of human's life.

There is no space for self sacrifice and there is no space for sorrow or regret either. Both Rearden and d'Anconia love Dagny, and both of them lose her to John Galt. This does not make them desperate though. They know that one should not be happy at the expense of another. Neither Hank nor Francisco need anyone to survive. One would never hear from

these two that their life came to an end just because the person they love left them. One may find that such people are unrealistic and that people are supposed to be distressed when their personal life is not going so well but to Rand they are all-sufficient and are able to be happy on their own.

In *Atlas Shrugged* one finds two types of government, two types of economic systems, and two types of personal relationships. There are always only two sides, good and evil. One leads to happiness, the other leads to distraction, and may be fatal.

To illustrate the right kind of relationship Rand depicts Hank and Dagny. Their case is very similar to when Dagny was with Francisco. In both relationships there were no conversations about personal lives of the characters. When Francisco was in college, Dagny never asked him about his friends or what he was doing. It was enough for her as long as he would return to her at least once in a month. The same tendency may be followed in Dagny's relationship with Hank. When they spend time together, they mostly talk about mutual goals and interests.

In the beginning Hank is ashamed of his connection with Dagny and after their first night together he tells her that they are both to be doomed and it was a huge mistake. She, on the other hand, assures him that their love is sacred and to be proud of, stating:

I want you in my bed—and you are free of me for all the rest of your time. There's nothing you'll have to pretend—don't think of me, don't feel, don't care—I do not want your mind, your will, your being or your soul, so long as it's to me that you will come for that lowest one of your desires. I am an animal who wants nothing but that sensation of pleasure which you despise--but I want it from you. You'd give up any height of virtue for it, while I—I haven't any to give up. There's none I seek or wish to reach. ... If I'm asked to name my proudest attainment, I will say: I have slept with Hank Rearden. I had earned it. [63]

She knows that the reason he came to her is because he is a strong, self-made man, who is looking for the same kind of person. She is a heroine to him, he admires her for the qualities she possesses. To be loved by him means to meet the criteria of a great man.

The wrong kind of relationships is introduced by Jim Taggart and Cherryl Brooks and Hank Rearden and his wife Lillian. Jim meets Cherryl and marries her for all the wrong reasons. She falls in love with him because she thinks that he is the man who prevented the catastrophe by removing everything of value from the San Sebastian Line. For her, he

represents people like Hank and Dagny. She is confused when he tells her about self-sacrifice and his friends. When she learns who her husband really is, she is so disappointed, that she is unable to carry this burden. She is just as hard-working as Dagny but she lacks philosophical education and is too young to deal with despair of this kind. She was so lost when she learnt that her husband was a nihilistic looter that she sees no other way but to commit suicide, which she does. Cheryl is an example of a victim who knew that there was something wrong with the world but did not know how to fix it. Unlike Galt she does not know about the existence of another society (Galt's Gulch).

The destiny of Lillian Rearden is not as tragic. She devotes her life to spoiling the life of her husband. She is a kind of person who knows that she will never be as great as he is, but she is trying to create an illusion that she is greater by destroying things he creates. Her goal is to prove the world that industrialists are no better than all the other people. Hank attends her party because he feels obliged. He wants to make her happy at the cost of his own happiness. Her husband and her have nothing in common, so there is no surprise when their marriage ends in divorce.

The contrast of these relationships shows that one should always take a rational approach, even when it comes to things that are considered to be irrational by most people. One should realise that his or her life consists of choices that he or she makes and not of involuntary decisions, after all we are humans, not animals that are guided by their instincts.

14. Conclusion

Atlas Shrugged touches upon almost every aspect of human's life. If one seeks a philosophy whose primary goal is to gain happiness, this book has an answer to everything. To an Objectivist, it does not matter whether he or she comes from a poor or rich family, this person knows that anything can be achieved by hard work. It can be seen through the fate of one of the main characters, Hank Rearden, who made his way up without any help. He started as an ordinary worker, and later became an owner of a huge industry. This book teaches to never give up. This, again, can be seen on the example of Hank and his metal. He was working on it for ten years, and finally succeeded. If one has a goal, he or she should follow it no matter what. There are no such things as circumstances and luck but there are hard work and aspiration.

Moreover, this book teaches one to be proud of living for one's own sake. It claims that there is no need for sacrifice or regret. According to Rand's philosophy, life is to be approached with reason, and rational behaviour should find its way into every aspect of one's life. The main characters in *Atlas Shrugged* follow this theory unquestioningly and it works out for them, just as it has worked out for Rand herself.

Of course, many may argue that not everyone can be as self-dependent and self-sufficient as the main protagonists. But, in reality, there is no reason why not, unless one is handicapped. In Objectivism no one is restricted by their genetic or social background. Everything depends on one's own desire and aspiration. One does not need anyone to help nor to support him or her in any way. The human is an end in himself, and should act in his or her own best interests.

On the paper, the philosophy sounds just as good and flawless as any other theoretical or ideological construct. However, even the examples that are illustrated in the book do not include factors like sudden death or other unpredictable circumstances that occur in real life. As to people being able to provide for themselves, ironically, Rand herself had to use the social services at the end of her life when she was ill with cancer. When it comes to personal relationships, she completely ignores natural feelings like pride, jealousy and possessiveness. She assumes that people are understanding and, just like in Buddhism, are capable of letting go. In the end, just like in any other theory, there should be the human factor taken into account.

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