



Ayn Rand: Conservative Heroine?

In the Sunday New York Times, Adam Kirsch, senior editor at The New Republic, writes a review of a recent biography of Ayn Rand, one of American history's most iconic figures. In his review, Kirsch includes numerous condemning gobbets he lifts from the pages of Anne Heller's biography, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*. He quotes Heller's claim that although she is unapologetically critical of Rand's philosophy and personal behavior, she is "a strong admirer, albeit one with many questions and reservations."



That's putting it mildly. Ms. Heller illustrates Ms. Rand's rank humanity with what reads as a zealous fervor. That is to say, with friends like Anne Heller, Ayn Rand needs no enemies.

Whether she needs them or not, Ayn Rand has a lengthy and distinguished roster of enemies. While it is true that many of Rand's most ardent and vocal enemies are to be found on the left side of the political spectrum, there are those on the right who disagree with her philosophy and the published pronouncements of it, as well. One of Ayn Rand's most noted and respected conservative critics was Whitaker Chambers who in a 1957 review of *Atlas Shrugged* published in *National Review* described Rand's most influential and best-selling novel as "remarkably silly," "preposterous," and full of "wickedness."

Apart from anything written in Rand's books, Anne Heller's own book lays out a pretty damning catalog of Ayn Rand's personal wickedness, as well. According to Hirsch, Heller recounts the story of a 44-year-old married Rand falling in love with a 19-year-old fan named Nathan Branden. Shockingly, Rand follows Brand to New York, insinuates herself into every aspect of his personal life, and begins a sexual affair with him, despite instructing him that he should marry his girlfriend. Heller further describes how this despicable relationship was the genesis of a group of cult-like Rand worshipers who called themselves "the Collective." According to a passage in the book quoted by Kirsch, the members of this fan club were so captivated by Ayn Rand that she "charmed so many young people into quoting John Galt [the capitalist hero of *Atlas Shrugged*] as religiously as clergymen quote Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

Famously, Rand herself had no use for the authors of the Gospels or any other iteration or practice of Christianity. She was proudly atheistic and railed ceaselessly against what she perceived as the useless distractions of Christian morality specifically, and the fanciful delusions that results from worship of deity in general. Ayn Rand argued explicitly for the replacement of revelation with reason and regarded as nonsense the cherished traditions of Christianity. There was but one absolute truth to whose dogma Ayn Rand was faithful — reason. Faith, hope, and charity were bugaboos invented to stifle the self-interested, unabated capitalistic zeal she believed was the ideal.

Ayn Rand's literary expression of this ideal was John Galt. Galt was the hero, in a manner of speaking, of Rand's most popular novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. Kirsch describes him as "an inventor disgusted by the



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creeping American collectivism.” Sounds good. All true conservatives are revolted by the daily march toward the sacrifice of American sovereignty to the will of globalists and other absolutists. Americans protective of their hard-won freedom rightfully reject all attempts to subvert their right of self-government. To that end, there are many self-styled conservatives who look to Ayn Rand and to Galt — her fed up capitalist archetype — for guidance and inspiration. In fact, according to a report published in the *Washington Times*, sales of *Atlas Shrugged* have tripled through April as compared to the same time last year.

Among others, Kirsch lists Glenn Beck as a prominent Rand promoter, as well as Republican Representative John Campbell who reportedly commented that “people are starting to feel like we’re living through the scenario that happened in *Atlas Shrugged*.” There is undoubtedly an air of truth in Congressman Campbell’s assessment of the desperation felt by so many Americans. Indeed, given the specter of socialized medicine, the collapse of the dollar, and the extension of welfare benefits to millions of illegal aliens, few conservatives could find fault with Galt’s declamation pronounced upon the announcing of a capitalist shut down, “We have no demands to present to you, no terms to bargain about, no compromise to reach. You have nothing to offer us. We do not need you.”

There is much about Ayn Rand’s “style of vehement individualism” with which conservatives can and should find fault, however. It must never be forgotten that no matter how relevant or inspiring some of her prose might be, Ayn Rand was more profiteer than prophet, and those Americans of faith, of any faith, must be wary of supplanting that which is sacred with that which at its core is shamelessly profane. Rand created worlds and situations that suited her narrow, selfish concerns and reflected her objectivist worldview. To wit, Rand’s close friend and the heir to her estate, Dr. Leonard Peikoff, proudly proclaimed that of all the players invented by Ayn Rand, Rand most closely identified herself with a character in her first novel, *We the Living*, whom he described as an “egoist, an individualist, a man of arrogant self-esteem who lives for his values.”

These values may be Ayn Rand’s, but they undeniably do not represent the core values of conservatives and patriots. For these dedicated men and women recognize that this nation is a nation built upon a solid irrefutable foundation of faith. More than with any captivating passages written by Ayn Rand decrying the ill-effects of the meddling of religion and God in American government and the poisoning effect of charity on the otherwise sweet water of capitalism, they identify with the following stirring words of President John Adams: “We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Photo of Ayn Rand: AP Images



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