



## **AYN RAND'S *THE FOUNTAINHEAD*: INDIVIDUALISM V/S COLLECTIVISM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Ayn Rand was a major intellectual of the twentieth century. Rand always found capitalism and the individualism of the United States as a welcome alternative to the corrupt and negative Socialism of Russia. After becoming proficient in English and establishing herself as a writer in the U.S., she became a passionate advocate of her philosophy, Objectivism. Ayn Rand's philosophy is in Aristotelian tradition. It is emphasized upon metaphysical, empirical reason in epistemology and self-realization in ethics. Objectivism tells about a rational self-interest and self-responsibility, the idea that no person is any other person's slave. The virtues of her philosophy are principled policies based on rational assessment, productiveness, honesty, integrity, independence, justice and pride. Her political philosophy is in the classical liberal tradition. It emphasizes on individualism.*

**Keywords:** Capitalism, Individualism, Socialism, Objectivism, Epistemology, Self-realization, etc.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ayn Rand wrote four novels: *We the Living* (1936), *Anthem* (1938), *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). She also published a play, *Night of January 16th* (1936), one short story *The Simplest Thing in the World* and seven books of nonfiction. *The Fountainhead* (1943) is Rand's first major professional success. It is a rationale for „selfishness or „egoism as a moral good. It is her best seller in which the difference between human beings whose souls are self-actualized and whose values are all derived not from any inner urgings, but from what others find valuable. It also depicts that man's ego is the fountainhead of his progress. The sale of *The Fountainhead*'s copies reached the mark of 20,000 in the first six months of publication and climbed to be 1,50,000 copies two years after its initial publication and recently surpassed 6.5 million copies. The recurring theme of the conflict between individualism and collectivism is also presented in the novel.



The conflict is dramatized in the story of Howard Roark, an architect whose independent vision and unbreakable artistic integrity pits him against the mediocrity and conformism prevalent in his own profession and in the society first time. *The Fountainhead* is a Hollywood film released in 1949 by Warner Brothers. Ayn Rand initially insisted that Frank Lloyd Wright designed the architectural models used in the film. The several revised scripts were presented before filming started in 1948 under the direction of King Vidor. *The Fountainhead* is a representative illustration of Ayn Rand's writing. It details the struggle of Howard Roark, a brilliantly creative architect who rejects conventional styles in a display of his own individuality. As a controversial novel, it is the story of an intransigent young architect, his violent battle against conventional standards and his explosive love affair with a beautiful woman who struggles to defeat him.

James P. Draper is right in his observation: "*The Fountainhead, chiefly through its character, points up a number of paradoxes in our time and culture*" (James, 364). The first paradox is the drive for competition and success on the one hand versus the constant demand for brotherly love and humility on the other. On one side, the individual is spurred on to greater and greater heights of success. It means that he must be assertive and aggressive, while on the other he is deeply imbued by the principle and ideal of unselfishness. A second paradox is that ones desires and needs are constantly kept stimulated, while the possibilities of fulfillment are slim or impossible. The third paradox is that a gap exists between the alleged freedom of the individual and his actual limitations. If all society is faced with these paradoxes, and all the conflicts implied in them are essentially impossible to solve, then Howard Roark, the really well balanced and secure individual will be the one considered neurotic by the society around him.

*The Fountainhead* is a story of Howard Roark's triumph. It points out what the man is, what he wants and how he gets it. It has to be a triumphant epic of man's 'I'. It has to show every conceivable hardship and obstacle on his way and how he triumphs over them, why he has to triumph. Roark is Rand's vision of the ideal man. Although Roark's character may have faults, but as the protagonist of this novel, is eminently consistent with Rand's belief about the heroic in man.

The novel begins on a day when Roark is dismissed from the Architectural School at Stanton. His striking originality does not fit in the accepted norms and the structure of society. The Dean asks for conciliation in his architectural designs. Ayn Rand propounds,

*The Dean sat watching him curiously. Something puzzled him, not in the words, but in Roark's manner of saying them. "Rules?" said Roark. "Here are my rules: what can be done with one substance must never be done with another. No two materials are alike. No two sites on earth*

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*are alike. No two buildings have the same purpose. The purpose, the site, the material determine the shape. Nothing can be reasonable or beautiful unless it's made by one central idea, and the idea sets every detail. A building is alive, like a man. Its integrity is to follow its own truth, its own single theme and to serve its own single purpose. A man doesn't borrow pieces of his body. A building doesn't borrow hunks of its soul. Its maker gives it the soul and every wall, window and stairway to express it (Rand, FH, 24).*

The Dean says that Roark is expelled for turning in overly modern designs. The Dean suggests that he may be able to return to the school once he has matured. Roark refuses the offer. The Dean is offended and informs him that he will never become a real architect. Roark leaves the Dean's office and thinks about how he does not understand men like the Dean. Roark defends his decision to design things in his own way. He tells the Dean that he has nothing more to learn from the school, so he has no intention of returning.

Roark explains his architectural philosophy: "the purpose, the site, the material determine the shape" of a building. He states simply that the days of classical design are over. He intends to have his own clients so that he may build as he sees fit. The Dean becomes so angry and he tells Roark that Committee has the right to expel him. Roark is man of unanswering integrity who leaves the office. Kelvin McGann states,

*Although it has all the characteristics of pulp fiction, including flood-tide length and watery content, The Fountainhead is, of course, much more than a potboiler about the personal traumas behind the lives of busy architects (Kelvin, 328).*

*The Fountainhead* is actually an 'idea' novel. It is crude and obvious about fiercely opposing political ideologies. It is an overheard version of an internal American cultural debate between individualism and collectivism. Rand speaks simultaneously to the highest aspirations and the deepest suspicions of the culture precipitating the broadly based, though most outspoken, acceptance of her work.

There is a sharp contrast between Howard Roark and Peter Keating. At the beginning of the novel Roark and Keating attend the same school, work in the same field and move to New York at the same time. Rand presents Roark as a natural being, his own man. He is seen first, standing naked among granite a cliff which suggests that he is as clean and pure as the elements that surround him. Rand presents Keating, in contrast, as self-absorbed and unable to think for himself. He is seen first wrapped in a graduation robe, contently reevaluating himself and dependent on the opinions of

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others. The novel alternates between the scenes of Roark's moral success and financial failure and Keating's moral failure and financial success.

The first meeting between Henry Cameron and Roark is well illustrated by Ayn Rand. She writes,

*He walked to the desk. People had always lost their sense of existence in Roark's presence; but Cameron felt suddenly that he had never been as real as in the awareness of the eyes now looking at him (Rand, FH, 47, 48).*

Henry Cameron draws on his own experience to describe the future that awaits Roark. Cameron says that he has integrity and the world will crush him. Cameron predicts that Roark will design the most beautiful building anyone has ever seen, but the world will refuse his design. Cameron ultimately proclaims not only that Roark represent a heroic ideal but also that Roark will actually try to reclaim their society from the degradation of the current form of architecture. Roark's standards are his own and are to be accepted or denied by the free assent of others.

Roark finds work with the architect, Henry Cameron, a once-popular architect who has fallen from grace. Like Roark, he loves his buildings more than his clients. Roark and Cameron work hard and talk little in their run-down and failing office. Mimi Reisel Gladstein comments,

*The plot follows his career from the day he is expelled from the Architecture School of Stanton Institute of Technology through his difficulties in establishing himself as a working architect to his professional and personal victory and vindication (Mimi, 36).*

Howard is a brilliant architect of absolute integrity. He has friends and colleagues, but relies on himself alone. He is tall, gaunt and angular with gray eyes and distinctive orange hair. He is the novel's idealization of man, bringing innovative and joyful buildings to the rest of the world. Ayn Rand states,

*Roark looked at the sketches, and even though he wanted to throw them at Keating's face and resign, one thought stopped him: the thought that it was a building and that he had to save it, as others could not pass a drowning man without leaping in to the rescue. (Rand, FH, 90).*



Howard Roark goes to New York to work for Henry Cameron, a disgraced architect whom Roark admires. Roark's schoolmate, Peter Keating, moves to New York and goes to work for the prestigious architectural firm Francon&Heyer, run by the famous architect Guy Francon. Roark and Cameron create beautiful work, but their projects rarely receive recognition, whereas Keating's ability to flatter and please brings him almost instance success. Henry Cameron retires, financially ruined and Roark opens his own small office. In this regard, Ayn Rand propounds: "It was a war in which he was invited to fight nothing, yet he was pushed forward to fight, he had to fight, he had no choice- and no adversary" (Rand, FH, 175). Howard Roark is a man of genius who rejects work on a joint assignment. He is jobless and workless for months. Austen Heller sees talent and originality in Roark and appoints him as an architect in his office. Henry Cameron says,

*It doesn't say much. Only „Howard Roark, Architect' But it's like those mottoes men carved over the entrance of a castle and died for. It's a challenge in the face of something so vast and so dark, that all the pain on earth and do you know how much suffering there is on earth? – all the pain comes from that thing you are going to face. I don't know what it is, I don't know why it should be unleashed against you. I know only that it will be. And I know that if you carry these words through to the end, it will be a victory, Howard, not just for you, but for something that should win, that moves the world—and never wins acknowledgement. It will vindicate so many who have fallen before you, who have suffered as you will suffer. (Rand, FH, 133)*

*The Fountainhead* centers on the primacy of the individual. Howard Roark is the embodiment of perfection. Rand wants us to admire his talent and courage; his struggles to resist society's way and remain true to himself. The novel resolves around Roark's struggle to retain his individuality in the face of forces bent on bringing him to heel.

Dominique is the female protagonist who comes in the life of Howard Roark. She works for the journal, 'The Banner'. Dominique's beauty and strength of spirit makes her a perverse, unusual woman and the perfect complement to Howard Roark. At the beginning of the novel, she is convinced of the world's rottenness and believes that greatness has no chance of survival. She instantly recognizes Roark's greatness, but she does not initially believe that he can survive in a selfless and rational society.

Peter Keating is a social parasite He is attracted by Dominique Francon and falls in love with her. Keating is a classmate of Roark who lives only for fame and the approval of others He is a good looking and commercially successful, but he steals his original ideas from Roark. Dominique looks at him as a second hander and social climber. He proposes

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her to marry him but she refuses and goes away to her father's firm in Connecticut to reassess her life. In order to rise to the top, Keating flatters, lies, steals, kills and even trades his wife, Dominique, for the opportunity to work on a promising project. His fall is even more rapid than his rise. Howard recalls his past memories and bygone days as Ayn Rand writes,

*He thought of his days going by, of the buildings he could have been doing, should have been doing and, perhaps, never would be doing again. He watched the pain's unsummoned appearance with a cold, detached curiosity; he said to himself. Well, here it is again. He waited to see how long it would last. It gave him a strange, hard pleasure to watch his fight against it, and he could forget that it was his own suffering; he could smile in contempt, not realizing that he smiled at his own agony" (Rand, FH, 202)*

Howard Roark has been working in the granite quarry for two months. All he asks is that he thinks of nothing but the granite in front of him and the tool in his hand. He likes the work, struggling with the stone and getting exhausted every day. He stays in the village with the other workers and eats with them, but he is apart from them. Sometimes, he enjoys lying on the grass as he studies the colors and shapes around him. All the while, however, he suffers from thinking about all the buildings he could be building all the time, Dominique is attracted by him.

Dominique wants to see the man suffer for her. She chips some marble in her house, then goes to the quarry and tells him that she has a job for him. He agrees to come to her house that night. Later, she realizes that his casual acceptance reveals some intimacy. Ayn Rand writes,

*One gesture of tenderness from him—and she would have remained cold, untouched by the thing done to her body. But the act of a master taking shameful, contemptuous possession of her was the kind of rapture she had wanted. Then she felt him shaking with the agony of a pleasure unbearable even to him, she knew that she had given that to him that it came from her, from her body, and she bit her lips and she knew what he had wanted her to know (FH, 217).*

Roark enters Dominique's home three days later He comes to Dominique and she fights him passionately but makes no sound. He takes her as an act of scorn, not as love but as defilement. And this made her lie still and submit. When he is done, Roark gets up and leaves. Dominique drags herself towards the bathroom for a bath and sees herself purple and bruised in the mirror. She knows she will not bathe because she wants to keep the



feeling of his body on her. Dominique thinks about Roark and is more furious in her knowledge that it is not the rape, but the fact that she has taken a pleasure in it.

Dominique's relation and meeting with Howard demonstrate that she is never free to begin with. She has only deluded herself into believing that she is free. When Dominique takes pleasure in the idea of feeling sexual desire for a quarry worker, that pleasure came both from her sexual desire and from her belief that she was acting against the norms of her society. Dominique's sexual relationship with Roark, and their first experience in particular, is one of the most complicated symbols of the book. Rand takes a great risk in choosing to give a rape a positive symbolic value. Rand makes clear that the ultimate consent of both parties is at the heart of the act. That the violence is consented to is understood by both Roark and Dominique. Dominique's warped simplicity in degrading herself in order to prove her freedom perhaps cannot be defended, but Roark's consent is worth further study. Although Roark is the rapist, he is also the victim for, he cannot resist Dominique and becomes a slave to his passions. Dominique resists not just Roark, but her own attraction to him. By fighting him, Dominique tries to rid herself of her desires. Neither character utters a word during the rape, a silence that suggests the oneness of their minds and contrasts with the physicality of the encounter.

Ellsworth Toohey, an architectural critic and socialist slowly prepares to rise to power. He seeks to prevent men from excelling by teaching that talent and ability are of no great consequence and that the greatest virtue is humanity. He believes if he convinces the world that mediocrity is the greatest of attributes, if he can rob mankind of its ideals and hope, if he can flatten all of society, into a smooth mass of unexceptional men, then he can become a great man. In order to achieve his goals, Toohey employs the language and arguments of religion and socialism.

Ellsworth Toohey arranges and manipulates things in such a way that Howard agrees to build a temple for Toohey's friend, Stoddard. It is to be known as the Temple of Human Spirit. Stoddard says, "That doesn't matter. You're a profoundly religious man, Mr. Roark—in your own way. I can see that in your buildings" (**Rand, FH, 319**). Howard Roark is trapped in the manipulative viciousness of Toohey. He goes to find Stephen Mallory, the sculptor who had tried to kill Toohey. Mallory is shocked by Roark's interest in his work and cries with relief at the knowledge that uncompromising men like Roark exist.

The following morning, Mallory visits Roark and looks at the sketches for the Stoddard Temple. Howard hires Steven Mallory to carve the statue of a naked woman as the symbol of human spirit. Mallory agrees to sculpt a statue of the Human Spirit of the Temple. Roark suggests Dominique for a model.

Howard Roark works with brilliant intensity. He designs a horizontal temple, scaled to human height. He wants to bring the sky down to man and allow visitors to find strength. His work is appreciated by some people. He gets three commissions namely, The Cord Building, The Aquitania Hotel, and The Stoddard Temple Howard states,

*The aspiration and the fulfillment, both. Uplifted in its quest – and uplifting by its own essence. Seeking God – and finding itself. Showing that there is no higher reach beyond its own form ..... You're are the only one who can do it for me (Rand, FH, 332).*

Howard begins working on the Stoddard Temple. He asks Stephen Mallory to make a statue for the Stoddard Temple adding that he wants him only because he saw his work and liked it. This last part is the hardest for Mallory to believe. Mallory looks at the sketches of the temple and asks Roark how it is possible to build such a thing in such a city as others. He tells Roark that he cannot sleep at night because all he can think of is the people who can see the best and still do not want it.

The Trial Scene plays a crucial role in Ayn Rand's novel, *The Fountainhead*. It is an essential part for a vital plot, structure and thematic analysis of a novel. Howard Roark's trial embodies individualism, integrity and rational self-interest. In this regard, Ayn Rand propounds,

*Compare that to Gail Wynand's conflict of values in regard to Howard Roark's trial in *The Fountainhead* – and decide which, esthetically, is the right way to present the ravages of a conflict of values (TRM, 84).*

The plot of the novel serves same function as the steel skeleton of a skyscraper. It determines the use, the placement of distribution of all the other elements. There are number of characters, background, descriptions, conversations, introspective passages have to be integrated with the events and contribute to the progression of the story. When Gail Wynand gets pleasure out of destroying other's integrity, he exposes both how much he longs to find a man who cannot be broken and how afraid he is that he might. At the trial, when he fails to break Roark, he is devastated because he knows unconsciously that if Roark could hold out against him he could have held out against temptation as well.

Howard tells Wynand, that he knew Wynand's integrity would not allow him to destroy Roark. Roark never gives up on Wynand because of the shallow and mistaken character of his actions. Wynand has the soul of a "first hander" rather than a second-hander like Peter Keating. The Stoddard Trial is also significant for the progression of plot and structure in the novel. Dominique says,

*I do not condemn Ellsworth Toohey. I condemn Howard Roark. A building, they say, must be part of its site. In what kind of world did Roark build his temple? For what kind of men? Look around you. Can you see a shrine becoming sacred by serving as a setting for Mr. HoptonStoddard? For Mr. Ralston Holcombe? For Mr. Peter Keating? When you look at them all, do you hate Ellsworth Toohey—or do you damn Howard Roark for the unspeakable indignity which he did commit? Ellsworth Toohey is right, that temple is a sacrilege, though not in the sense he meant. I think Mr. Toohey knows that, however. When you see a man casting pearls without getting even pork, chop in return – it is not against the swine that you feel indignation. It is against the man who valued his pearls so little that he was willing to find them into the muck and to let them become the occasion for a whole concert of grunting, transcribed by the court stenographer”*  
**(Rand, FH, 356).**

The courtroom at the trial is packed full of spectators. The entire room is almost clearly in support of the plaintiff. Stoddard is not there. On Roark’s side of a courtroom sit Austen Heller, Mike and Stephen Mallory. Roark looks calm and collected. The plaintiff’s opening statement reveals that the basis of the argument is that Roark’s design could not be considered a temple by anyone, least of all a trained architect. Roark waives his opening statement.

Dominique is the last witness. She defends Howard Roark. She says that the Stoddard Temple would be leveled because the world does not deserve it. She has refused to be coached but the plaintiff expects a lot from her. Dominique’s testimony is similar to several of her columns about Roark. She says that Howard Roark built a Temple of the Human Spirit. Toohey sees a man as strong, proud, clean, wise and fearless. Ellsworth Toohey says that this temple is a monument for a profound hatred of humanity. Stoddard wins the suit. Dominique submits her trial testimony. AlvahScarret objects. Dominique threatens to quit if the article is not printed. Dominique says,

*So you people made a martyr out of me, after all. And that is the only thing I’ve tried all my life not to be. It’s so graceless, being a martyr. It’s honoring your adversaries too much. But I’ll tell you this, Alvah – I’ll tell it to you, because I couldn’t find a less appropriate person to hear it: nothing that you do to me – or to him – will be worse than what I’ll do to myself. If you think I can’t take the Stoddard Temple, wait till you see what I can take **(Rand, FH, 359).***

Scarret cables Gail Wynand who is always on a cruise but he cables back in his secret code, "Fire the bitch." The same evening, Dominique asks Keating to marry her. They drive to Connecticut and get married. That night, Dominique goes to Roark. After they make love, Dominique tells Roark for the first time that she loves him. Dominique also tells Roark that she will punish herself by marrying Keating because she refuses to be happy in a world that does not appreciate Roark. Howard says,

*You must learn not to be afraid of the world. Not to be held by it as you are now. Never to be hurt by it as you were in that courtroom. I must let you learn it. I can't help you. You must find your own way*  
**(Rand, FH, 376).**

Howard Roark makes no attempt to put forth a defense that can actually win him the case. He does not care about the legal system or about triumphing in it; rather, he seeks only to defend the integrity of his work. He shows the same lack of concern for marriage because he sees it as a meaningless formality. He feels no jealousy towards Keating about his marriage to Dominique. He also feels no compulsion about committing adultery with her. She considers all value systems but his own utterly irrelevant.

The Courtlandt Trial is the climax of the novel. James T. Baker comments on the scene in this novel,

*At his trial Howard serves as his own defense attorney. He calls no witnesses. He admits freely that he blew up the Cortlandt, which he also admits he designed* **(James, 56).**

This is a courtroom where Roark is tried, filled with many enemies and few stalwart friends. Guy Francon astounds everyone by sitting with Austen Heller, Mike, Kent Lancing, Dominique and Stephen Mallory. The prosecution gives an opening statement declaring that the defendant is worst of all things an egoist; they must make an example of him. The jury is made up of two executives of industrial concerns, a mathematician, a truck driver, a bricklayer, an electrician, a gardener and three factory workers. Stephen Cox writes,

*In The Fountainhead, Roark delivers a relatively brief, rhetorically effective speech that serves the double purpose of stating his essential ideas and of getting him acquitted in his climatic courtroom battle*  
**(Stephen, 23).**

One of Ayn Rand's aims in *The Fountainhead* is to show that evil can never win complete success. Another is to show that the fundamental sins are intellectual one. Roark

says that he has dynamited Cortlandt because he cannot wish it to exist in that form. He has every right to destroy it, for it is his creation. It is right to change it or cheapen it. He says that the integrity of a man's creative work is of greater importance than any charitable endeavor. The legal discussions follow for Roark had admitted to blowing up Cortlandt, but he had not changed his plea to guilty. The jury is instructed and the spectators depart, preparing for a long wait. When Roark is about to leave the courtroom, the jury walks in. The verdict is "not guilty" Roark looks at Wynand and he is the first man to leave the courtroom.

Toohey sees Roark as a great threat and tries to destroy him. At Roark's trial, every prominent architect in New York testifies that Roark's style is unorthodox and illegitimate, but Dominique declares that the world does not deserve the gift Roark has given it.

The entire country condemns Roark of dynamiting Cortlandt Homes, but, Wynand finally finds courage to follow his convictions and orders his newspapers to defend him. The Banner's circulation drops and the workers go on strike, but Wynand keeps printing with Dominique's help. Eventually, Wynand gives in and denounces Roark. At the trial, Roark seems doomed but he rouses the courtroom with a statement about the value of selfishness and the need to remain true to oneself. Roark describes the triumphant role of creators and the price they pay at the hands of corrupt societies. The jury finds him not guilty. Roark marries Dominique. Wynand asks Roark to design one last building, a skyscraper that will testify to the supremacy of man.

At the Courtlandt Trial, Howard serves as his own defense attorney. He calls no witnesses but gives a long speech. He says,

*Independence is the only gauge of human virtue and value. What a man is and makes of himself; not what he has or hasn't done for others. There is no substitute for personal dignity. There is no standard of personal dignity except independence (Rand, 681).*

Howard Roark, in his trial defends only one thing i.e. ego. Rand sums up the ideology of the novel by giving both Roark and Toohey two lengthy philosophical monologues. These two monologues serve the same role as closing arguments in the courtroom, a last chance for each side to make its point.



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