

## Ethics

### Discussion

Reply to Stephen R. C. Hicks, "Egoism in Nietzsche and Rand" (Spring 2009)

# Egoism in Nietzsche and Rand: A Somewhat Different Approach

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I find that I am largely in agreement with Stephen R. C. Hicks' excellent article. Anyone who wishes to understand the relationship (or lack of one) between Friedrich Nietzsche and Ayn Rand will need to read Hicks. What disagreements there are between what he says here and what I would say on the same subjects would have more to do with his comments on Nietzsche than those on Rand. Any differences beyond that would be more a matter of emphasis than anything else. However, since differences of emphasis can be interesting and important, I will comment on them here.

First, I should make some more general comments, to place these issues in context. My own approach to understanding Rand, as far as serious scholarship is concerned, is developmental.<sup>1</sup> The same is true of my approach to Nietzsche, for that matter. I try to understand a thinker or writer by (in part) trying to figure out how they came to be what they are. Applied to Rand, it is probably inevitable that this approach will move her relationship with Nietzsche into the foreground. In its own way, her exposure to Nietzsche was as important as her exposure to Aristotle's logic or free market economics. I hesitate to say so, since it raises the risk of being misunderstood. I don't mean that she ends up agreeing with him *more often* than she agrees with these other sources and influences, but that what she owes him (which, for all that, may be limited to very specific issues) is at least as profound.

I see Rand's relationship to Nietzsche as falling into three distinct

periods. In the earliest one, which ends during the writing of *The Fountainhead*, it is easy to find elements—both language and ideas—that have a strong affinity to language and ideas in Nietzsche. We are obviously dealing with a writer upon whom Nietzsche has made a very big impression, though admittedly the nature and magnitude of this impression is by no means obvious. During the next period, which begins during the writing of *The Fountainhead*, we find her developing her ideas, including ones that she may have originally derived from Nietzsche, in some very non-Nietzschean ways. During the final period, which begins in the early 1960s, we find her explicitly commenting on Nietzsche in her published works. These comments are overwhelmingly derogatory, and sometimes harshly so. Obviously, the sequencing of these events poses some interesting questions.

Why did her position, or at least her tone, about Nietzsche change so sharply in the last period? One of the reasons is perhaps obvious. She must have been very upset about the possibility of being misunderstood. Nietzsche is the one thinker with whom she is most often associated in the popular mind. If you look into the blogosphere, you don't see references to "that Aristotle-influenced novelist-philosopher, Ayn Rand," or to "Ayn Rand's neo-Lockean political philosophy of individual rights." You do see references to (something like) "that Rand-Nietzsche philosophy of 'me first'." By attacking Nietzsche so vigorously, she was probably saying, as Nietzsche does in *Ecce Homo*: "Hear me! For I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone else" (*EH*, Preface:1). I mention this here because the project of differentiating Rand and Nietzsche is much less urgent for me than it must have been for her. Dispelling such crude misconceptions is of course still worth doing, but for me, at least for purposes of an article in this *Journal*, it is not such an urgent desideratum—particularly given that Hicks has just done such an excellent job of dispelling them. I don't mind placing somewhat more emphasis on positive relations between Rand and Nietzsche than Hicks does, at least if I can do so without inviting new misunderstandings. With that proviso in mind, let us take a look at how the Rand-Nietzsche connection appears from a developmental point of view.

Readers familiar with Nietzsche's works will have no trouble

finding echoes of Nietzschean language and themes in *The Fountainhead*. He is, after all, the only real person who is overtly quoted or paraphrased in the book. The paraphrase—“it is not our function . . . to be a fly-swatter”—is given to Ellsworth Toohey, who takes the occasion to distance himself from Nietzsche, calling him “a philosopher whom we do not like” (Rand 1943, 360). This suggests, to me at any rate, a comparison between Nietzsche and the other philosopher Toohey does not like: Howard Roark. Roark’s language does indeed bring Nietzschean phrases to mind at crucial points. He speaks of saying “yes” and “amen” to life, in order to express a state of feeling much like the one that Zarathustra expresses with the same (in English translations) language. Roark’s comments on the character-type of “the creator” in his courtroom speech bring to mind Zarathustra’s language in the chapter “The Way of the Creator” (582, 736–44).

Another feature of the book that perhaps inevitably brings Nietzsche to mind is the way in which *conflict* is treated in it. Most people think of conflict as a bad thing, at best a regrettable precondition of things that are otherwise good. This was of course not Nietzsche’s view. In *Zarathustra*, he presents a view of friendship in which it is basically a form of competition scarcely distinguishable from outright enmity. Something rather like this is true of the friendships and love-relationships in *The Fountainhead*—and it is most true of the relationship that is most intense and closest to Rand’s ideal: namely, the relationship of Dominique and Roark. This is most obvious in the so-called “rape” scene in Part II, but conflict of various sorts characterizes their relationship throughout. During a significant portion of the narrative, Dominique is literally Howard’s worst enemy, and she is so—because she loves him!<sup>2</sup>

Of course, these apparent linguistic and thematic echoes of Nietzsche may or may not represent underlying similarities in terms of philosophical principle. What do we see when we look into explicit discussions of ideas in *The Fountainhead*? What we see is a positive connection with Nietzsche, but one that I find complex and difficult to summarize briefly.

I will begin by discussing one very specific connection, which is to be found in the relationship between Rand’s treatment of pity as an ethical idea and that of Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s critique of pity is of

course well known. What is much less well known is that the idea of pity constitutes a persistent leitmotif of Rand's novel. The connection between Rand and Nietzsche on this issue is worth pausing over because it is small enough to be treated more or less fully in brief compass, and because it can be taken as representative of the connection between them on issues that are more complex and fundamental.

Nietzsche's most developed discussion of pity (*A*, 7) raises the following objections against it. First, inasmuch as pity (*Mitleid*) causes the one who pities to suffer along with the one who is pitied, it multiplies suffering. This is a shortcoming if we assume (as the advocates of pity do) that suffering is bad. Second, because it does cause the observer to identify with the suffering of others, it reduces, according to Nietzsche, one's strength and will to live. Third, pity causes us to try to prolong the existence of failed forms of life, a practice that eventually "gives life itself a gloomy and questionable aspect." Fourth, Plato, Aristotle, La Rochefoucauld, Kant, and all noble moralities are critical of pity (see also *GM*, Prol.6), while moralists who value it highly (Schopenhauer, Wagner, Tolstoy—I would add Martha Nussbaum) are decadents. Elsewhere (*BGE*, 225), Nietzsche suggests that there is another sort of pity, one that is quite different from pity as it is usually understood, a sort of pity that he himself sometimes experiences. Pity in the usual sense is a certain distress at the suffering of others and rests on treating suffering as bad. In fact, suffering (according to Nietzsche) is not *per se* bad, because some suffering (such as the sort that is caused by conflict with oneself and self-overcoming) is a condition of creativity and excellence. The other sort of pity—"Nietzschean pity," as we might call it—consists in a certain distress at seeing people in conditions that destroy creativity and excellence.

Rand's treatment of pity in *The Fountainhead* betrays in various ways its origins in Nietzsche, beginning with the fact that, like Nietzsche, she is very critical of the idea of pity as a cardinal virtue. However, she clearly develops her own critique in her own way and along new lines. The difference between her treatment and Nietzsche's is connected in an interesting way with other differences between them.<sup>3</sup>

The subject is first broached in *The Fountainhead* when Dominique

makes some comments about it that clearly suggest an ethical objection to pity. In feeling pity (the word she actually uses is “compassion,” though without implying any distinction between the two words), she says: “One can let oneself go and spread—you know, like taking a girdle off. You don’t have to hold your stomach, your heart, or your spirit up—when you feel compassion. All you have to do is look down.” The objection to pity suggested here rests, like the first two Nietzschean objections, on a contrast between the direction of attention of the person who experiences pity—downward, in the direction of failure and deficiency, rather than upward in the direction of flourishing and excellence. The “antithesis” of compassion, Dominique says, is (not cruelty or coldness, as we might have expected, but) “admiration” (Rand 1943, 301). Obviously, the heart of this objection to pity is the idea that it is a comfortable alternative to striving for self-perfection. Though this idea has some affinity to some of the Nietzschean objections to pity, it is, somewhat surprisingly, different from anything Nietzsche ever actually says. Still, it is very much in the spirit of the peculiar sort of idealism that is one of the most salient characteristics of Nietzsche’s writings.

The second time pity makes an appearance, it expresses an idea that is much closer to the letter of Nietzsche’s text. This time, it appears when one of the characters, Dominique again, experiences pity. It occurs one evening, twenty months after she married Peter Keating. Keating is telling her what a devastating effect their marriage has had on his psychological well-being. Though she has never done anything intentionally cruel or even disagreeable, she has also never shared, or pretended to share, the elaborate structure of socially supported self-myths on which his life is based. He reproaches her for it, saying that she had “taken something” from him. She says that she had only taken his pretense at it, and not the thing itself, though, she confesses, “I grant you that’s worse.” At that moment, “She looked down at his face against her knees, and he saw pity in her eyes, and for one moment he knew what a dreadful thing true pity is, but he kept no knowledge of it, because he slammed his mind shut before the words in which he was about to preserve it” (456).

This is clearly a case of what I’ve just called Nietzschean pity. That is what makes it so dreadful: it is a response, not merely to the fact that the life of the pitied person contains pain, but to the

defective value of that life itself. This passage also suggests that there might well be reasons, perhaps ones with a strong connection with Nietzsche's concerns, for doubting the ethical value of this state of mind. This suggestion is reinforced by the last and most memorable passage in which pity makes an appearance in the novel.

In this passage, the object of pity is, once again, Peter Keating. Late in the narrative, after years of opportunistic compromises, he returns furtively to a childhood dream of being a painter. It was his original career-choice, given up under pressure from his mother, who thought being an architect is more "respectable." He shows Roark some of his canvases, quietly and hopelessly accumulated in weekend sessions. In looking at the paintings, Roark "took a longer time than he needed. When he could trust himself to lift his eyes, he shook his head in silent answer." After Keating leaves, "Roark . . . leaned against the door, closing his eyes. He was sick with pity."

He had never felt this before—not when Henry Cameron collapsed in the office at his feet, not when he saw Steven Mallory sobbing on a bed before him. Those moments had been clean. But this was pity—the complete awareness of a man without worth or hope, this sense of finality, of the not to be redeemed. There was shame in this feeling—his own shame that he should have to pronounce such a judgment upon a man, that he should know an emotion that contained no shred of respect. This was pity, he thought, and then he lifted his head in wonder. He thought that there must be something terribly wrong with a world in which this monstrous feeling is called a virtue. (631–32)

Again, this passage is interesting both for the way in which it indicates Nietzsche's influence and for the way in which it suggests a rather different way of thinking. On the one hand, there is a conviction that pain is generally not the worst thing that can happen to a person, and a Nietzschean concern that the pity of an enlightened person would be responsive to this fact. On the other hand, there is a concern that this sort of pity, though more enlightened than the other sort and perhaps unavoidable, is in a way even more horrible. The ground for this worry is a concern that is not explicitly reflected

in any of Nietzsche's discussions of pity, that this more enlightened sort of pity is even farther removed than ordinary pity from admiration and respect for the person one is pitying. This aspect of the critique of pity suggested by *The Fountainhead* is related to other ways in which Rand's critique differs from that of Nietzsche. Why does Roark feel shame at experiencing Nietzschean pity? Shame is a moral sentiment in which one experiences some aspect of oneself as somehow deficient in value. For Roark, and of course for Rand, it is apparently a moral desideratum to try to find in others something, at least a spark of something, that could be, or at least could become, worthy of admiration. This desideratum—should we call it “respect for others”?—would seem absurd to Nietzsche. As Hicks has shown very well, the standards by which Nietzsche would pronounce something to be worthy of his admiration are ones that are simply not applicable to most people. If anything, I would emphasize this even more than Hicks has. As H. L. Mencken (1918) said: “Nietzsche had no interest whatever in the delusions of the plain people—that is, intrinsically. It seemed to him of small moment *what* they believed, so long as it was safely imbecile” (18). Allowing for the fact that Mencken is exaggerating somewhat for emphasis, this is as true of Nietzsche's view of the moral ideas and principles of plain folk as of their other “delusions.” Nietzsche does not wish “plain people” to live by his standards and ideals.

This of course is far from being Rand's view. Her principles, unlike Nietzsche's, are universals, and this means that her ethic, oddly enough, is in a deep way more egalitarian than his. She expects a spark of something admirable in everyone. Indeed, she demands it, and denounces the sorry state of the world because so many fail to show it. Nietzsche would think this is pointlessly cruel, like flogging a horse for failing to pull a load that is beyond its strength. This of course may be why we do not find the last-mentioned of Rand's objections to pity—that in its purest form it would contain no shred of admiration or respect—in Nietzsche's writings. It cannot be an objection to pity for him because in most cases he denies the possibility of the relevant sort of admiration or respect. Most people do not deserve that sort of respect and cannot possibly earn it. The absence of that which is not possible hardly constitutes an objection.

What we see here, I think, is Rand taking an idea (very likely)

from Nietzsche and—very far from merely repeating it or echoing it—using it as a material element for building something that is very much her own, so that the idea comes to have a meaning that is essentially different from the one it had in his system. I have told the story of this developmental process because, as I have said, it can be told briefly and because, as far as I know, it has never been told before in print. What is much more important, I think a similar sort of story can be told about an idea that is very much more important to Nietzsche than his critique of pity, and for Rand as well: the idea of *power* as a positive value. A full account of what happens to this Nietzschean idea in Rand’s writings is a much longer story—too long to tell here. In addition to that, although I have already told part of the story elsewhere, I have not yet done the archival research needed in order to prepare the full account for publication.<sup>4</sup> However, two very crucial phases of this process are fairly close to the surface of Rand’s writings and more or less obvious—at least once one has been cued to look for them—to anyone familiar with her works.

The first phase of the process is the treatment of the nature of power in *The Fountainhead*. It is actually one of the principal thematic elements of this book. Two characters in the work—Howard Roark and Gail Wynand—represent different conceptions of what power is and of its role in the life of society and the individual. The relationship between the analysis Rand thereby presents and that presented by Nietzsche is subtle and complex (and I will say more about it below), but one thing is eloquently clear: the conception of power that she prefers—namely, that represented by Roark—is a very different one from Nietzsche’s conception. I would also maintain that, given that the analysis contains a defense of her conception, it implies a searching criticism of that of Nietzsche. Crucial to her analysis, however, is the idea that power *is* a profoundly important value, and this idea of course represents an underlying dimension of agreement with Nietzsche. This dimension of agreement is easy to spot because, throughout this analysis, she calls both values—that of Roark and that of Wynand—“power.” This, of course, is the most common and fitting English translation of Nietzsche’s word, *Macht*.

Both Roark and Wynand value power, but under profoundly different conceptions of what real power is. For Roark it means power to act, and in particular, to create. For Wynand it is power

over others. The course of events in the novel shows that Wynand in fact lacks power altogether. True power is what Roark has. He says in his courtroom speech: “The creators are not selfless. It is the whole secret of their power—that it was self-sufficient, self-motivated, self-generated” (Rand 1943, 737). The “secret” to the power of the creator lies in the role of the self, conceived primarily as the faculty of judging and establishing values, in the value-structure of the acting individual. Of course, though the fact that Roark represents Rand’s ethical ideal as including a certain conception of power connects her in a fundamental way with Nietzsche, it also differentiates her from him at least as deeply: the false sort of power represented by Wynand is something that Nietzsche accepts as not false but true power.

The other phase in Rand’s rethinking of the value of power is to be found in the mature works that begin with the writing of *Atlas Shrugged*. Here the connection with Nietzsche is further weakened. You might say that it is also submerged, because although the Roarkian sort of power remains a basic value—in fact, it is arguably *the* basic value for Rand—she no longer calls it “power.” Instead she treats it by speaking of efficacy, of productiveness, and most fundamentally, of “man’s survival *qua* man.” It is this last idea that in Galt’s radio speech is prismatically split into seven different virtues: rationality, independence, integrity, honesty, justice, productiveness, and pride. The position Rand thus ends up with is different from Nietzsche’s in various ways, several of which are skillfully set out by Hicks. I will have more to say about the differences when I focus my attention on Nietzsche, below, but one thing that is already suggested by the brief characterization I have just given is that Rand’s conception of (what I think we can still call) power in *Atlas Shrugged* and the subsequent works is a good deal more complex and articulated than Nietzsche’s. His notion of power is by comparison undifferentiated and simple. She spells out how a finite set of virtues is needed to achieve it, and she also specifies the ways in which each of these virtues is connected with it. Nietzsche never does anything like that. Another difference between them is obvious from my characterization of the treatment of power in *The Fountainhead*. The Roarkian kind of power is incomparably more freedom-friendly than the Nietzschean variety. With it, there is no longer any possibility of saying good

things about Cesare Borgia, Napoleon, or the Hohenstaufen Friedrich II. Nonetheless, I want to stress that there is a sort of continuity between them. Rand has taken Nietzsche's continental, aristocratic idea and *transformed* it into something capitalistic and American.

There is another important Randian idea that has its origins—in this case I suppose I should say *probably* has its origins—in Nietzsche. This is the idea of human life as, to use Rand's phrase, "the standard of value." In one form or another, this idea can be found throughout Nietzsche's works. One of his earliest works, the *Untimely Meditation* on history, is focused on the question of which style or method of historical scholarship is best, and the underlying principle on the basis of which he answers the question is that the best one is that which enhances and supports human life:

There can be no doubt: life is the higher, the dominating force. For knowledge which annihilated life would have annihilated itself with it. Knowledge presupposes life and thus has in the preservation of life the same interest as any creature has in its own continued existence. Thus science requires superintendence and supervision. . . . (UM, II:10.)

In a much later work, *Twilight of the Idols*, he applies much the same point of view to morality:

Every naturalism in morality—that is, every healthy morality—is dominated by an instinct of life; some commandment of life is fulfilled by a determinate canon of "shalt" and "shalt not"; some inhibition and hostile element on the path of life is thus removed. (TI, V:2)

Indeed, in an unpublished note, he argues for applying this approach to value in general:

If one severs an ideal from reality one debases the real, one impoverishes it, one defames it. "The beautiful for the sake of the beautiful," "the true for the sake of the true," "the good for the sake of the good,"—these are three forms of evil eye for the real. —Art, knowledge, morality are *means*:

Instead of recognizing in them the aim of enhancing life, one has associated them with the antithesis of life, one . . . [regards them] . . . as the revelation of a higher world which here and there looks down upon us through them. — (*WP*, 298)

The precise relationship between his version of this idea and that of Rand is, once again, a long story. I have argued elsewhere that Nietzsche's views on this issue were rather murky and shifting (Hunt 1991, 111–22). If the complete story of the relationship between Nietzsche and Rand can be told, most likely what we would see is, once again, Rand taking an originally Nietzschean idea and transforming it into something that is very much her own.

Notice, by the way, that all three of the points which I have spotlighted as positive connections between Nietzsche and Rand—the critique of pity, the notion of power as a value, and life as the standard of value—are in the field of ethics. This I think is likely to be true of most or perhaps all of the positive connections between them. Obviously, the differences between them on epistemology and metaphysics are pervasive and profound. This is probably connected with the reason the last of the three periods I mentioned at the outset, the period in which Rand's comments on Nietzsche were overwhelmingly derogatory, was so different from the first. Between the first period of her relationship with Nietzsche and the last—during, that is, the decade of the forties—she became much more interested in these other, more fundamental areas of philosophy. Once this transformation had taken place, Nietzsche would have looked quite different to her. Probably, his errors (as she would see it) in these more fundamental areas would alter the meaning and severely limit the value of the areas of apparent agreement. Nonetheless, it would still be true, as I have suggested, that what she owed him was important and indeed crucial to her becoming the unique thinker and writer that she did become.

As I suggested earlier, my substantive differences with Hicks, such as they are, are in the area of Nietzsche interpretation rather than on the other side of the relationship between these two thinkers. The general thrust of these differences I think is toward seeing Nietzsche as less repugnant than Hicks makes him out to be and, partly for this

reason, less far away from Rand.

The most important issue, I think, has to do with the precise nature of Nietzsche's idea of power. Hicks seems to interpret Nietzsche's conception as being, quite simply, the one that I have associated with the character of Gail Wynand. Nietzsche, on his interpretation, sees the fundamental ethical alternative as between Gail Wynand's way and that of Ellsworth Toohey, and of course he rejects the Toohey alternative. This would seem to imply that power as a fundamental value would have to be Wynandian power: the ideal would be power-over, and not power-to. The Nietzschean texts themselves are I think more murky and more ambivalent than this.

I believe Nietzsche's own conception of power is most lucidly expressed in a passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where he says:

whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or obliterated. (*GM*, II:12)

Power, in this sort of view, is a three-place relation, between a being that serves as material or subject-matter, a dominating agent that directs this material toward some purpose or meaning, and the purpose or meaning toward which it is directed. Though he here calls this process "interpretation," this is actually, quite generally, Nietzsche's account of action itself. This means that for him there is no distinction between Roarkian power-to and Wynandian power-over. All action, for him, involves reducing something or someone else to the status of mere material or resource. Given this, it wouldn't be quite right to say that the sort of power he is talking about is, quite simply, power-over, and in my comments above I have carefully avoided saying that it is. The truth of the matter is that he has a conception of power that avoids making any distinction between power-over and power-to. It also, rather pointedly it seems to me, avoids making any distinction between power over people and power

over nature, a distinction that is obviously important to Rand. This rather complicates the exact relationship between Nietzsche's conception of power (so far as it is an important value) and that of Rand, except that it is still perfectly clear that hers commits one to rejecting his. Thus, the case for hers is still an implicit critique of his.

Nietzsche's conception is of course quite compatible with his valuing the activities and way of life we identify with Roark high above those that are represented by Wynand, and I think it is clear that he does. Nietzsche's enduring interest, amounting almost to an obsession, was in the exemplary individuals who create high culture, including philosophy but especially art. This begins in his very first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he treats Aeschylus and Sophocles as godlike figures who transform human psychology in a way that makes life on earth truly worth living. He later repudiated important aspects of this early work, but his idea that the most admirable human beings are the great cultural creators was of course not one of the ideas that he repudiated. It saturates all his works.

Perhaps the most troubling of Nietzsche's ethical and political views from an Objectivist point of view are his comments on the relation between "higher" and "lower" specimens of humanity, including his statement in *Beyond Good and Evil*, quoted by Hicks, that every healthy aristocracy "accepts with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings, who, for its sake, must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments" (*BGE*, 258).

This is a deeply disturbing statement, but exactly what does it mean? In the book *Daybreak*, published nine years after *The Birth of Tragedy* and five years before *Beyond Good and Evil*, we find a section that I think is very suggestive in this regard. It begins like this:

Poor, happy and independent!—these things can go together; poor, happy, and a slave! these things can also go together—and I can think of no better news I could give to our factory slaves: provided, that is, they do not feel it to be in general a *disgrace* to be thus used, and *used up*, as a part of a machine and as it were a stopgap to fill a hole in human inventiveness! To the devil with the belief that higher payment could lift from them the *essence* of their miserable conditions—I mean

their impersonal enslavement. To the devil with the idea of being persuaded that an enhancement of this impersonality within the mechanical operation of a new society could transform the disgrace of slavery into a virtue! (*D*, 206)

He goes on to consider what these people ought to do to escape the disgrace of their condition. They should not, he says, heed “the flutings of the socialist pied-pipers” who would entice them to “wait and wait for something to happen from outside and in all other respects go on living as [they] have always lived.” Rather, he says,

In contrast with all this, everyone ought to say to himself: “better to go abroad, to seek to become master in new and savage regions of the world and above all master over my self; to keep moving from place to place for just as long as any sign of slavery seems to threaten me; to shun neither adventure nor war and, if the worst should come to the worst, to be prepared for death; all this rather than further to endure this indecent servitude, rather than to go on becoming soured and malicious and conspiratorial!” (*D*, 206)

He is suggesting that European workers go emigrate to seek dignity and autonomy in places like the American West—a thing that, incidentally, they had already been doing in large numbers (and in part for the same reasons that he gives) for some decades. At this point in his career, he still has a good deal of sympathy for the factory workers, something that was to more or less disappear by the time he wrote the passage in *Beyond Good and Evil*. But there is also something that the two passages seem to have in common: a rather expansive conception of what “slavery” means. In the earlier passage he makes it quite explicit that what is essential to being a “slave” in his sense is not that one is literally owned by someone else, but that one is degraded into a position of subordination and subservience in relation to them. It is in this sense that he regards the workers in a factory as slaves.

Something like this same sense must be applied to his later comments on the subject as well, if they are to make sense, as when he says that “every enhancement of the type ‘man’ has so far been the

work of an aristocratic society . . . a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other” (BGE, 257). After all, what could it mean to say that belief in differences in value between persons *always* needs slavery? Note the qualification, “in some sense or other.” To make sense of what he is saying here, we must apply something very much like the *Daybreak* meaning of “slavery”: what he is justifying here is hierarchy and subordination, not literal enslavement.

In his fullest description of his ideal political system, he describes an aristocratic system divided into higher and lower orders of people. In the highest caste are the “most spiritual human beings,” whose “joy is self-conquest; asceticism,” he says, “becomes in them nature, need, and instinct.” They have “the privileges of the fewest: among them, to represent happiness, beauty, and graciousness on earth.” These people appear to be artists, philosophers, and artist-philosophers like Nietzsche himself. The lowest caste includes the enormous majority of the people, those for whom “to be mediocre is their happiness; mastery of one thing, specialization—a natural instinct.” It is their place to carry out most of the functions of economic, social, and cultural life: “Handicraft, trade, agriculture, *science*, the greatest part of art, the whole quintessence of *professional* activity” (A, 57). Nietzsche says that the members of the highest caste do not consider the “mediocrity” of the lowest order to be an objection against them: in fact, mediocrity in this sense “is the very *first* necessity if there are to be exceptions: a high culture depends on it” (A, 57).

I take this to mean that the function of the lowest order—which consists of everyone who does anything that has practical survival-value—in relation to the highest order consists in supporting the highest and so making possible their impractical, low-survival-value activities. Indeed, it is their duty to do so. In this particular respect—and I emphasize that I am only talking about this aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy—the character from Rand’s fiction that best represents Nietzsche’s idea is not Gail Wynand, but Dr. Robert Stadler. What I have in mind is Stadler’s endorsing the tax-supported State Science Institute on the grounds that the nobility and impracticality of his end gives him a right to other people’s means. This puts the Nietzsche position worlds away from Rand, obviously, but it is

not as awful as it sounds at first. Nietzsche likes to put his ideas in ways that make it difficult to agree with him (obviously, he is not seeking agreement), but behind the somewhat shocking rhetoric he is basically saying (with an aestheticist twist) what defenders of aristocracy (including not only the fictional Stadler but the real Aristotle) have always said: that some people owe others a living, because those others are superior sorts of people.

Finally, I would like to comment briefly on Nietzsche's relations to individualism. Hicks says that the impression that Nietzsche sometimes gives readers, that he is an individualist, is simply a misimpression. I agree that Nietzsche is not really an individualist—indeed, he quite explicitly says that he is not. But the real reason he dissents from individualism, I think, places him closer to an individualist like Rand than Hicks believes he is. He points out that Nietzsche says, in an unpublished note later collected in *The Will to Power*, “If one regards individuals as equal, one calls the species into question, one encourages a way of life that leads to the ruin of the species” (*WP*, 246). Hicks interprets this as meaning that the standard of value that Nietzsche endorses is the collective good of the species, to which individuals must sacrifice themselves. This would make Nietzsche out to be some sort of utilitarian. Since his maximand, if he has one, would have to be power, this would seem to commit him to a sort of, so to speak, *utilitarianism of power*. This would be the idea that what makes things right is that they maximize the sum of everybody's power, added together.

Such an idea would not suit Nietzsche at all. In fact, the language in which I just expressed the idea makes obvious one reason it would not suit him: It can't be the case that for him *everyone's* power counts equally. He is not nearly egalitarian enough for that. Note that in the passage quoted by Hicks, the idea that Nietzsche is attacking is precisely that of equality. In the third of the *Unitimely Meditations*, the one titled *Schopenhauer as Educator*, he attacks utilitarianism, and the basis of his attack is his anti-egalitarianism:

It seems to be an absurd demand that one man should exist for the sake of another man, “for the sake of all others, rather, or at least for as many as possible!” O worthy man! as though it were less absurd to let number decide when

value and significance are at issue. For the question is this: how can your life, the individual life, receive the highest value, the deepest significance? . . . Certainly only by your living for the good of the rarest and most valuable exemplars, and not for the good of the majority . . . (UM, III: 36)

Obviously, what he is saying here both overlaps with and diverges from what Rand says on the same issues. He insists, as she does, that it is absurd to live for the sake of the collective (i.e., what he calls “the majority”), but the reason he gives is not the one that she would give. Her reason would be that it is absurd to live *for anyone*. The answer he gives is the aristocratic one, that one should live for the best and the rarest. Even here, though, his position still overlaps with hers *in a way*: for what he is saying here can be captured by a phrase that Rand sometime applies to herself, namely, hero-worship. Nietzsche’s aristocratic hero-worship I think is the key to understanding the collectivist-sounding language in the passage from *The Will to Power*. As he says elsewhere in the same section of *Schopenhauer as Educator*,

when a species has arrived at its limits and is about to go over into a higher species, the goal of its evolution lies, not in the mass of exemplars and their well-being, but rather in those apparently scattered and chance existences which favorable conditions have here and there produced; . . . mankind ought to seek out and create the favorable conditions under which those great redemptive men can come into existence. (UM, III: 6)

I take this to mean that the improvement and benefit of the species, which would be the contrary of the “ruin of the species” mentioned in the *Will to Power* passage, consists in the production of a few of these “redemptive” individuals. If we are not already living the Nietzschean ideal, we should devote ourselves in one way or another to those who are—this would mean, at a minimum, working to bring about a world in which such individuals can exist.

There is another note collected in *The Will to Power* that is relevant here, one that, as I understand it, is very suggestive as to just what Nietzsche’s relations with individualism are:

My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not at an individualistic morality. The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions, as do the independent, or the “beasts of prey,” etc. (*WP*, 287)

I understand the material that comes after the first sentence as an explanation of its truth. That is, the reason his ideal is not an individualistic morality is that it is not universalized and applied to the “lower” orders. This feature of course does not indicate that it is not individualistic. What it does indicate is that it is not moral since, after Kant, we think of morality as something that by definition applies to everyone. In other words, his view avoids being an individualist morality, not by avoiding individualism, but by avoiding morality. His ideal is individualistic, but it is for the elite person, “the independent,” only. This would mean that he differs from Rand on this issue, not because he is not an individualist, but because he refuses to apply his individualism to everyone. This is also one of the ways in which he differs from one of his great mentors, Ralph Waldo Emerson (*Stack* 1992).

I have devoted as much space as I have to discussing what Nietzsche really meant, even though our primary subject is Rand, for a reason. When we are speculating about Rand’s relations with Nietzsche, and in particular about how much or little she might have been influenced by him, it is logically relevant to gather evidence about what is really in the Nietzsche text. It is relevant to our understanding of what someone reading Nietzsche, as Rand did, and avidly, would have found there. Rand said a number of times that he was an important thinker for her in her early years. The further away from her that we place Nietzsche philosophically, the less likely we are to think that there is something philosophically interesting in his influence on her. Maybe the most plausible conclusion we can draw is that he was simply an author she read for emotional inspiration of some sort, a kind of spiritual refueling that she could only get by (to mix metaphors) placing in brackets the philosophical content of what he was saying. If I am right, that conclusion loses a good deal of its plausibility. Like Rand, he rejects the ethical collectivism exemplified

by utilitarianism, and he does so because of another idea she shared with him: like her, his ethical views required him to be a hero-worshiper. She works out these ideas very differently than he did—and I should probably add that all the Randian innovations I have noticed are improvements on the Nietzschean originals. But the connection is philosophical in nature, and it is substantial and interesting.

## Abbreviations for Works Cited

<b>Nietzsche's works</b>
A <i>The Antichrist</i>
BGE <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
D <i>Daybreak</i>
EH <i>Ecce Homo</i>
GM <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
TI <i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
UM <i>Untimely Meditations</i>
WP <i>The Will to Power</i>

## Notes

1. See Hunt 2006. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that the editor of *Philosophy and Literature*, without my knowledge or permission, changed one of the words in the title of this article, from “spoke” to “spake,” thus giving it (to my ears at least) a satirical sound that was no part of what I intended. He also changed the subtitle of the article, which originally was “The *Transformation* of Nietzschean Ideas in *The Fountainhead*” (emphasis added). My version was meant to suggest a less crude and direct connection between the Nietzsche and Rand than the one suggested by the new, unauthorized version.

2. For a fuller account of Nietzschean echoes in *The Fountainhead*, see Hunt 2006.

3. On Rand’s treatment of pity, see Minsaas 2000.

4. As to the part of the story that I have already told, see, once again, the article cited in note 1, above.

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