

## Egoism in Nietzsche and Rand

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### Part One: On Critiquing Altruism Three Nietzsches and Ayn Rand

To what extent is Ayn Rand's ethical theory Nietzschean? Three Friedrich Nietzsches are relevant to making that judgment.

Here is one Friedrich Nietzsche—the worshiper of human greatness: “the concept of greatness entails being noble, wanting to be by oneself, being able to be different, standing alone and having to live independently” (*BGE*, 212). Such a man “has a taste only for what is good for him” (*EH*, I:2) and “instinctively seeks heavy responsibilities” (*WP*, 944). “Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority” (*BGE*, 26). He also “knows how to make enemies everywhere” (*WP*, 944). The noble man “honors himself as one who is powerful, also as one who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and be silent, who delights in being severe and hard with himself and respects all severity and hardness” (*BGE*, 260). There is “some fundamental certainty that a noble soul has about itself, something that cannot be sought, nor found, nor perhaps lost. *The noble soul has reverence for itself*” (287). Plus: “believe me, the secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is: to live dangerously! Build your cities under Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas!” (283). Living such a life, Nietzsche says, “one emerges again and again into the light, one experiences again and again one's golden hour of victory—and then one stands forth as one was born, unbreakable, tensed, ready for new, even harder, remoter things, like a bow that distress serves to draw tauter” (*GM*, I:12).

Here is another Friedrich Nietzsche—the critic of altruism, hypocrisy, and cowardice, and the best name-caller in the history of philosophy. Nietzsche calls Plato, the philosopher who projects another realm of perfect and static Forms in contrast to this messy and changeable physical world, “a coward in the face of reality” (*TI*, “What I Owe to the Ancients,” 2). “Christianity,” says Nietzsche, “is Platonism for ‘the people’”—that is to say, Plato for dummies—and also “a rebellion of everything that crawls on the ground against everything that has *heigh!*” (*A*, 43). Nietzsche calls Immanuel Kant, the ruling philosopher of Germany in the nineteenth-century, “that most deformed concept-cripple of all time” (*TI*, “What the Germans Lack,” 7) and—given Kant’s “abhorrent scholasticism” (*TI*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 49), that is, his predilection for spinning neutered, rationalistic webs of ideas to snare the unwary—a “disaster of a spider” (*A*, 11). The emerging welfare state of the nineteenth century is “the coldest of all cold monsters” where “the slow suicide of all is called life” (*Z*, I:11).

Such quotations explain why Nietzsche’s writings can be attractive to those also attracted to Ayn Rand’s. Rand’s sparkling prose and heroic view of man are, like Nietzsche’s, a rush of adrenaline to intelligent young readers for whom the world is fresh and full of promise and whose whole lives are ahead of them. Her writings, like Nietzsche’s, remain a powerful source of inspiration for older readers who have succeeded in remaining young at heart in a world that contains much compromise, complacency, disappointment, and outright evil. Nietzsche and Rand are kindred spirits of passion and exaltation.

Those who stay with Rand philosophically as well as literarily do so because they judge that her philosophy of reason, independence, and freedom is true—and they hold onto those principles in the face of vigorous opposition from philosophers of irrationality, conformity, and authoritarianism. In most cases, Nietzsche’s enemies are Rand’s enemies, so philosophical readers of Rand resonate with Nietzsche when he attacks their common enemies in Plato, Kant, and the statist.

Yet there is a third Nietzsche—one more ruthless and blood-thirsty. Speaking well of the noble races of the past, Nietzsche explains their accomplishments this way: “One cannot fail to see at

the bottom of all these noble races the beast of prey, the splendid blond beast, prowling about avidly in search of spoil and victory; this hidden core needs to erupt from time to time, the animal has to get out again and go back to the wilderness” (*GM*, I).

About slavery, Nietzsche says that a 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).

About war, Nietzsche says, “One must learn from war: ... one must learn to sacrifice many and to take one’s cause seriously enough not to spare men” (*WP*, 982).

And about violence in general, Nietzsche says, approvingly, “The beginnings of everything great on earth [are] soaked in blood thoroughly and for a long time” (*GM*, II:6).

Remarks such as these should give pause to any identification of Rand’s views with Nietzsche’s, given Rand’s vehement opposition to slavery and the zero-sum conflict view of the world.

Nietzsche has become part of the philosophical canon and Rand is becoming so. Commonly the two are identified, and this is why the issue of the intellectual relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche and Ayn Rand is an important one. Nietzsche is usually interpreted as an arch-individualist, as anti-altruistic, and as an iconoclast outside the mainstream. The same points are true of Rand. So to many casual readers a simple identification of Nietzsche and Rand follows.

## Some Intellectuals on Nietzsche and Rand

A sampling of popular intellectual culture yields many such identifications:

Norman Markowitz (2005), a leftist critic, speaks of “Ragnor [sic] Danneskjöld, a character in Ayn Rand’s campy glorification of Social Darwinism and Laissez-Faire capitalism, *Atlas Shrugged*. (Rand called her jivey mish mash of Herbert Spencer and Friedrich Nietzsche ‘objectivism’ meaning that a social law of the jungle represents the highest level of science.)”

Philosophy blogger Marijo (2003) connects Nietzsche and Rand this way: “Nietzsche is explicitly on the side of the aristocracy—another admirer of Napoleon—and he is unashamedly opposed to democracy, and Buddhism, which he equates with nihilism. In these

latter choices, he foreshadows Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and the novels of Ayn Rand."

Science fiction writer China Mieville (2002) is less flattering in evaluating Rand's writings: "This panoply of portentous Nietzscheanism lite. . . ." Colin Barth (2004) adds a negative moral evaluation to the charge of Rand's being an intellectual lightweight: "It was impossible to liken Rand to Nietzsche, but only because Rand was a child in comparison (though not in innocence or playfulness)." And Abiola Lapite (2005) concludes that Rand's continuing appeal can only be explained in terms of juvenile psychology: "the Nietzsche-aping, pulp fiction writing, self-promoting egotist who is still worshipped by millions of callow teenagers and Peter Pans worldwide."

None of the above quotations are from professional philosophers. But they are from intelligent journalists, graduate students in philosophy, and political commentators, and they speak to a reputation common to Nietzsche and Rand.

Many academics will say much the same thing: "Most philosophy professors will tell you that Ayn Rand is a poor man's Nietzsche" (Lee 2004). The late Allan Bloom (1987) is representative: "When I first noticed the decline in reading during the late sixties, I began asking my large introductory classes, and any other group of younger students to which I spoke, what books really count for them. . . . There is always a girl who mentions Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, a book, though hardly literature, which, with its sub-Nietzschean assertiveness, excites somewhat eccentric youngsters to a new way of life" (62).

There is another parallel between Nietzsche and Rand in the judgments made about both by philosophers who were their contemporaries. When Nietzsche was a young professor of classical philology at the University of Basel in Switzerland, the university's professors of philosophy told their students not to take Nietzsche's courses, arguing that he was an intellectual lightweight and not really a philosopher: "For a time, Nietzsche, then professor of classical philology at the University of Basle, had no students in his field. His lectures were sabotaged by German philosophy professors who advised their students not to show up for Nietzsche's courses" (Cowan 1962, 4).

The above quotations illustrate two variations on a common

theme of believing Nietzsche's and Rand's views to be essentially similar:

(1) The first is that Nietzsche and Rand are equivalent in the content of their philosophies—but whereas Nietzsche is now respected for the philosophical power of his views, Rand can be dismissed as an intellectual lightweight.

(2) The second is that Rand's views echo Nietzsche's—but in a cruder, more callous, uncaring, and bloodthirsty way.

In my judgment, the theme common to both (1) and (2) is false. Nietzsche and Rand disagree on many, many more philosophical issues than they agree upon. Even focusing on their ethical theories, where the common assumption is that their views are quite close, they agree on very little. They share a deep agreement that altruism is an immoral and dangerous ethic—and their analyses and condemnations of altruism are strikingly similar—but when one turns to their positive alternatives to altruism, one finds an almost complete opposition.

The issue of the intellectual relationship between Nietzsche and Rand is important, both for understanding each thinker's views accurately in their own right and for understanding where each stands in the landscape of philosophical possibilities.

Nietzsche, for example, was an influence on Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, most of the intellectuals and politicians associated with the National Socialists, and most of the postmodernists, including Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.

All of those thinkers' views are distant from Rand's, and while Nietzsche was also an influence upon Rand, to call all of them "Nietzschean" is not clarifying. Most of those thinkers were steeped in the European Continental intellectual tradition, so in my judgment the connections between Nietzsche's and their views are much stronger. One problem that has plagued scholarship on Nietzsche is the many interpreters who come to Nietzsche from the Anglo-American tradition and read him through the lens of that tradition's Enlightenment individualism. Yet Nietzsche warns against such readings and repeatedly has only contempt for the English style of doing philosophy.

They are no philosophical race, these Englishmen: Bacon signifies an *attack* on the philosophical spirit; Hobbes, Hume,

and Locke a debasement and lowering of the value of the concept of ‘philosophy’ for more than a century. It was *against* Hume that Kant arose, and rose; it was Locke of whom Schelling said, *understandably, je méprise* Locke [I despise Locke]; in their fight against the English-mechanistic doltification of the world, Hegel and Schopenhauer were of one mind (with Goethe)—these two hostile brother geniuses in philosophy who strove apart toward opposite poles of the German spirit and in the process wronged each other as only brothers wrong each other. (*BGE*, 252)

In other cases, however, the association of Nietzsche with Rand is based on ignorance or a superficial reading of one or both—or upon a desire to package-deal Rand with Nietzsche in order to tar her with the unsavory elements of Nietzsche’s philosophy. So the issue is worth a closer look.

A caveat: In this essay, I will be focusing only upon Nietzsche’s and Rand’s ethical philosophies, and only upon Rand’s mature ethical philosophy. I will leave aside for other scholarship their views on metaphysics, epistemology, politics, and art, as well as the issue of how Nietzschean or not Rand’s youthful writings were.

### **Egoism, Altruism, and “Selfishness”**

The normative content of an ethics follows from its standard of value. What should be one’s highest value, the value to which one dedicates one’s efforts and against which one measures all other values? The two major contenders in the history of ethics are *self* and *others*. Ethics of self-interest hold that one’s own self is one’s highest value, that one should pursue one’s self-interest, and that one should measure all other values in terms of their impact on one’s self-interest. All such ethical theories are egoist—from the Greek “ego” for “self” or “I.” Ego-*ism* is thus a principled *self*-ism. Ethics that reject self-interest as the highest value usually substitute the interests of others as the highest value and hold that one should dedicate oneself primarily to the interests of others and measure all other values in terms of their impact on the interests of others. All such theories are altruist—from the Latin “alter” for “other.” Altru-*ism* is thus a principled *other*-ism.<sup>1</sup>

A series of closely-related questions must be answered in determining the full content of an ethical theory, whether egoist or altruist.

What is the *self*? Is the self to be identified with one's mind, body, spirit, reason, or emotions? Is the self essentially *individual* or not? Does the self have the capacity of *volition* or not, and, if so, *how much power* does the self have to shape itself?

What are the self's major *interests*? Are they the satisfaction of basic physical needs, pleasure, a sense of community, serenity, freedom, knowledge, power, wealth, flourishing, or what? Are those interests *intrinsic, objective, or subjective*? Are they *universal* to the species or are they *particular* to the individual?

By what cognitive means does the self come to *know* its interests—through instinct, passion, reason, or what?

Is self-interest the *standard of value*? Is ethics fundamentally about the maintenance and development of oneself, or is the self primarily a means to or part of the development of some value beyond itself? (Or is the self valueless, as some religions hold, or a disvalue, as some environmentalists hold?)

What *specific policies* of thought and action should the self practice? Should one be rational or passionate, productive or predatory or charitable, pro-active or passive, proud or humble, benevolent or aggressive, or what? (Not at the outset to assume that the above are either-or choices.)

As a result of the above, are self-interests *mutually satisfiable* socially? Does the pursuit of one's self-interest conflict with others'—or does it leave others unaffected—or is there a harmony?

Integrated sets of answers to the above questions fall into three major categories—what I will call “Egoism,” “Altruism,” and colloquial “Selfishness.”

For example, suppose that one holds wealth to be one of the self's interests. “Selfishness” in much common usage is the position one should intentionally pursue one's self interest—in this case, the acquisition of wealth—but that one person's pursuit of wealth conflicts with others' pursuit of wealth, so one should be aggressive against others to get wealth.

One major form of altruism holds that the pursuit of wealth is in conflict with a higher value—other people's peace and stability—so

one should sacrificially restrain one's interest in wealth for the sake of others. Another form holds that others' need for basic wealth is in conflict with one's desire for luxuries, so one should in principle sacrifice luxuries and act charitably.

Egoism is the position that wealth is a value that must be produced, so one should commit to producing the wealth one needs. Yet one's being productive is also beneficial to others, given that production creates value for mutually-beneficial trade.

Generalizing from wealth as an example to policies for all of life's values: "Selfishness" holds that one should intentionally pursue one's self-interest at the expense of others. Altruism holds that one should intentionally selflessly pursue others' interests at one's own expense. And egoism holds that one should intentionally pursue one's self-interest, which has as a consequence the possibility of mutually-beneficial transactions with others.

	<i>Altruism</i>	<i>"Selfishness"</i>	<i>Egoism</i>
<i>Intent</i>	Selfless	Self-interest	Self-interest
<i>Consequence to self</i>	Sacrifice	Benefit	Benefit
<i>Consequence to other(s)</i>	Benefit	Sacrifice	Benefit or neutral

Egoism and Selfishness agree on the moral intent—seek one's self interest—but not about the necessary means and consequences of moral action. Selfishness and altruism agree that self-interests are in a zero-sum conflict—but not about whose interests should be rated highest.

The connection to Nietzsche and Rand is this: Both agree that altruism is bad, and Rand learned a great deal from Nietzsche. But when one turns to their positive ethical theories one finds an almost complete opposition. Nietzsche and Rand disagree about what the self is, what its major interests are, whether self-interests are mutually-

satisfiable socially, what major policies of action are moral—and even about whether self-interest is the highest moral value.

## **A Nietzschean Sketch**

### **God is Dead**

For thousands of years humans have been religious, but in the modern world religion has become a shadow of its former self. Nietzsche's dramatic phrase, *God is dead*, is meant to capture the personal and shocking quality of this revelation (*GS*, 108, 125). For those raised religiously, religion *personalized* the world. It gave them a sense that the world had a purpose and that they were part of a larger plan. It gave them the comfort that, despite appearances, we are all equal and cared for and that upon death—instead of a cold grave—a possible happily-ever-after ending awaits.

But in the modern world we find it hard to believe that anymore. We have seen the dramatic rise of science, which has offered less comfortable answers to questions religion traditionally had a monopoly on. We have thrown off the shackles of feudalism with its unquestioning acceptance of authority and knowing our place. We are more individualistic and naturalistic in our thinking (*GS*, 117).

But in historical time all of this has happened very quickly—in the span of a few centuries. For millennia we have been religious, but come the nineteenth century even the average man has heard that religion may have reached the end of its journey. For most of us, even the suggestion of this hints at a crisis.

Imagine a thirteen-year old who is awakened in the middle of the night to be told by strangers that both his parents have died. He is suddenly an orphan. As long as he can remember his mother and father have been presences in his life, looking after him and guiding him, sometimes firmly, but always a benevolent protection and support in a world that he is not yet able to handle on his own. Now they are gone and ready or not he is thrust into that world alone. How does the young teen handle that sudden transition?

Culturally, Nietzsche says, we are like that young teen. For as long as we can remember our society has relied upon God the Father to look after us, to be a benevolent—and sometimes stern—guiding force through a difficult world. But now, suddenly, we are orphaned. We wake up one morning to discover in our heart of hearts that our

naively childhood religious beliefs have withered.

So now, whether we like it or not, a question creeps into our minds: How do we face the prospect of a world without God and religion?

In the nineteenth century, says Nietzsche, most people do *not* face that question well.

### **Nihilism's Symptoms**

Most people avoid the issue, sensing that even to raise it would be to enter dangerous territory. They sense that the game might be up for religion, but out of fear they shut off their minds and will themselves to believe that God is still out there somewhere. Life without religion is too scary to contemplate, so they retreat to a safety zone of belief and repeat nervously the formulas they have learned about faith. Now, says Nietzsche, it is one thing for a medieval peasant to have a simple-minded faith, but for us moderns such a faith has a tinge of dishonesty about it.

Slightly better to Nietzsche, but not much, are the socialists of the nineteenth century (*Z*, 1:11; *TI*, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 34). Socialism is on the rise, and many socialists have abandoned the religion of their youth—but only halfway. Most socialists accept that God is dead—but then they are very concerned that the State take God's place and look after them. The mighty State will provide for us and tell us what to do and protect us against the mean people of the world.

Think of it this way: The Judeo-Christian tradition says this is a world of sin, in which the weak suffer at the hands of the strong, that we should all be selfless and serve God and others, especially the sick and helpless, and that in a future ideal world—Heaven—the lion will lie down with lamb, and the inescapable power of God will bring salvation to the meek and judgment to the wicked.

The socialist tradition says this is a world of evil exploitation, in which the strong take advantage of the weak. But we should all be selfless and sacrifice for the good of others, especially the needy—"From each according to his ability, to each according to his need"—and the forces of history will necessarily bring about a future ideal world that will end all harsh competition, empowering the oppressed and eliminating the evil exploiters.

Both religion and socialism thus glorify weakness and need. Both recoil from the world as it is—tough, unequal, harsh. Both flee to an imaginary future realm where they can feel safe. Both say: *Be a nice boy. Be a good little girl. Share. Feel sorry for the little people.* And both desperately seek someone to look after them—whether it be God or the State.

So where, asks Nietzsche, are the men of courage? Who is willing to stare into the abyss? Who can stand alone on the icy mountaintop? Who can look a tiger in the eye without flinching?

Such men exist. Every generation produces its occasional magnificent men—sparkling, vital men who accept easily that life is tough, unequal, unfair, and who welcome asserting their strength to meet the challenge. Those who have unbending wills against anything the world can throw at them.

But such magnificent men seem to be few and far between in the nineteenth century, and Nietzsche wonders why. And he looks back on past cultures where the magnificent men dominated: strength was prized and inequality was a fact of life. Assertiveness and conquest were a source of pride. He names the Japanese feudal nobility as an example, with their samurai code of honor, and the Indian Brahmins who rose and imposed their caste system, the Vikings who raided ruthlessly up and down the European coast, the expansionist Arabs—and of course the awesome Roman Empire (*GM*, 1:11).

What explains this stark contrast? Why do some cultures rise to greatness and unabashedly impose their will upon the world—while other cultures seem apologetic and urge upon us a bland conformity?

## **Two Bio-Psychological Types**

Part of the answer, says Nietzsche, is biological. All of organic nature is divided into these two types of species—those who are naturally herd animals and those who are naturally loners—those who are prey and those who are predators. Some animals are by nature sheep, field mice, or cows—and some animals are by nature wolves, hawks, or lions. Psychologically and physically, this divide also runs right through the human species. Some people are born fearful and inclined to join a herd—and some are born fearless and inclined to seek lonely heights. Some of us are born sedentary and sluggish—and some of us are born crackling with purpose and craving adventure

(*TI*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 33, 35). Some, to use Nietzsche’s language, are born to be *masters*, and some are born *slaves*.

There is a continuum here, but one cannot do anything about which type one essentially is. There is a brute biological fact here: Our traits are evolutionarily bred into us. Just as a sheep cannot help but be sheepish and a hawk cannot help but be hawkish, each of us inherits from our parents a long line of inbuilt traits. “It cannot be effaced from a man’s soul what his ancestors have preferably and most constantly done” (*BGE*, 264). Biological determinism is for Nietzsche a consequence of a more general metaphysical determinism: “the single human being is a piece of *fatum* from the front and from the rear, one law more, one necessity more for all that is yet to come and to be. To say to him, ‘Change yourself!’ is to demand that everything be changed, even retroactively” (*TI*, “Morality as Anti-Nature,” 6).

The master types live by strength, creativity, independence, assertiveness, and related traits. They respect power, courage, boldness, risk-taking, even recklessness. It is *natural* for them to follow their own path no matter what, to rebel against social pressure and conformity (*GM*, 1:6). And by contrast the slave types live in conformity. They tend to passivity, dependence, meekness (*BGE*, 199). It is *natural* for them to stick together for a sense of security, as herd animals do.

## Psychology and Morality

Nietzsche then turns to morality—good and bad, right and wrong. For a long time we have been taught that morality is a matter of commandments set in stone thousands of years ago.

Not so, says Nietzsche: what we take to be moral depends on our biological nature—and different biological natures dictate different moral codes.

Think of it this way: If you are a sheep, then what will seem *good* to you as a sheep? Being able to graze peacefully, sticking close together with others just like you, being part of the herd and not straying off. What will seem *bad* to you? Wolves will seem bad, and anything wolf-like, predatory, or aggressive. But what if you are a wolf? Then strength, viciousness, and contempt for the sheep will come naturally to you and seem good. There is nothing the wolves

and the sheep can agree on morally—their natures are different, as are their needs and goals, as is what feels good to them. Of course it would be good for the sheep if they could convince the wolves to be more sheep-like, but no self-respecting wolf will fall for that. As Nietzsche puts it amusingly:

That lambs dislike great birds of prey does not seem strange: only it gives no grounds for reproaching these birds of prey for bearing off little lambs. And if the lambs say among themselves: ‘these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb—would he not be good?’ there is no reason to find fault with this institution of an ideal, except perhaps that the birds of prey might view it a little ironically and say: ‘we don’t dislike them at all, these good little lambs; we even love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb.’ (*GM*, 1:13)

Nietzsche argues that the same holds for humans. The divide between strong and weak, assertive and timid, runs right through the human species. Consequently, the right question to ask is not: Is such and such a value really valuable? But rather: What *kind of person* finds this value valuable? One’s moral code, Nietzsche holds, is a “decisive witness to who he is,” to the “innermost drives of his nature” (*BGE*, 6). “Moral judgments,” he says, are “symptoms and sign languages which betray the process of physiological prosperity or failure” (*WP*, 258; see also *D*, 542 and *BGE*, 221).

## Genealogy

So: one’s moral code is a function of one’s psychological make-up, and one’s psychological make-up is a function of one’s biological make-up.

The biological language and examples show that biology is crucial to Nietzsche’s views on morality. Nietzsche was a precocious fifteen years old when Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was published in 1859. Much of the intellectual world was moving away from thinking of the world in terms of timeless absolutes to viewing it in terms of process and change, and Nietzsche is among the first to apply evolutionary concepts to morality: Moral codes are part of a biologi-

cal type's life strategy of survival, and the more one looks at the history of morality evolutionarily and biologically, the more one is struck by dramatic changes in moral codes across time.

And this is the key problem, Nietzsche argues, when we consider the altruist and egoist moral codes, for the historical record shows a disturbing inversion. Formerly, we prized above all excellence and power, and we looked down upon the humble and the lowly. Yet now the meek, the humble, and the common man are the "good," while the aggressive, the powerful, the strong, the proud are "evil" (*GM*, 1:4). Somehow the morality of the weak has become dominant, and the morality of the strong has declined.

This moral inversion is dangerous: the traits of strength and power, i.e., those that ennoble man, are now condemned; and the traits of ordinariness and modesty, i.e., those that weaken man, are praised. Morality, accordingly, has become a bad thing; or, more paradoxically, morality has become immoral. As Nietzsche puts it, "So that precisely morality would be to blame if the highest power and splendor actually possible to the type man was never in fact attained? So that precisely morality was the danger of dangers?" Accordingly, Nietzsche argues, "we need a critique of moral values, the value of these values themselves must first be called in question—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed . . ." (*GM*, Preface:6). The morality of the weak has somehow become dominant, and the morality of the strong has declined. How is this rather paradoxical state of affairs to be explained?

Part of the story is bio-psychological—in terms of what morality resonates with what psychological type of person one is. But part of the story is cultural—and here there is a history lesson. "[U]nder what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? and what value do they themselves possess?" (*GM*, Preface:3). Different moral codes develop under different survival circumstances, so Nietzsche searches history for the survival circumstances that enabled and necessitated the development of the altruistic, slave code. In the West, Nietzsche finds the slave morality's roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition (*GM*, 1:7), in a decisive set of events that occurred early in Jewish history, before the time of Moses: the enslavement of

the Jews in Egypt. The significant result of the Jews' being enslaved for a long time was the development and internalization of a moral code suitable for surviving slavery.

Suppose that you are a slave: how do you survive? By contrast, what actions will kill you? What actions will increase your chances of staying alive? And if you have children who are born into slavery, what survival strategies will you teach them?

In order to survive, a slave must obey the master. This does not come naturally. So the first lesson is: you must stifle your nature. Suppose the master strikes you—the desire for revenge comes naturally—but you have to stifle it. Suppose the master tells you to wait—being inactive does not come naturally—but you must suppress your desire for activity. Suppose the master tells you to do something you do not want to do—you must override your desire to do what you want and obey. Generalizing, you must train yourself to restrain your natural impulses and to internalize a humble, patient, obedient self. You know you must do this because slaves who do *not* end up dead. Consequently, Nietzsche asserts, slave virtues have survival value: obedience, humility, forgiveness, and patience are good for slaves. And those are the traits slaves will drill into their children if they want them to survive. Over time, the slave virtues become cultural values.

Thus, Nietzsche argues, the slave values became the internalized cultural values of the Jews and were precisely what enabled them to survive their long enslavement (*GM*, 1:14).

In every generation many people are sheep-like and do not especially mind being slaves. But others resent it, and here the story Nietzsche tells becomes darker. Some of those slaves are living human beings with a human being's desire to live, grow, express who one is—all humans have the will to power. But what if they cannot express it? Then they must live in constant frustration: in order to survive they must direct their natural strength and assertiveness *against* the expression of their own strength and assertiveness. This naturally leads them to resent the master strongly—but they also start to hate *themselves* for doing what the master says and for their own role in suppressing themselves. But, psychologically, hating oneself causes unbearable pressure inside: “the outward discharge [of the instincts] was inhibited . . . [and] turned backward against man himself.

Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction—all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: that is the origin of the ‘bad conscience’” (*GM*, 1:16). Hatred of the strong, self-hatred, internal torment, and revenge fantasies to ease the pain become the lived psychological reality of such slaves. Make this psychological reality a matter of months and years, and the results will be very ugly and poisonous.

More provocatively, Nietzsche argues that such slave individuals who feel the internal war most strongly become the social leaders of the slaves—that is to say, they become their priests. The priests are those individuals among the slaves who prove to have the most drive, however thwarted, and the most cunning: “It is because of their impotence that in them hatred grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions. The truly great haters in world history have always been priests” (*GM*, 1:7).

In their leadership role, it is the priests who most strongly advocate meekness, humility, and obedience to their flock—and who condemn the aggressive strength and pride of the masters. The priests are not in a position to use physical power against the masters, and the physically powerful masters find it beneath their dignity to fight against an unarmed and to them contemptible enemy. Instead the priests develop and use *morality* as their weapon of confrontation. The morality that enables their survival as weak slaves is also useful as a weapon against the strong master. Praising the meek and condemning the strong is both a strengthening tool for the weak and a weakening tool against the strong. Made into an explicit code, Judeo-Christian ethics “has waged a *war to the death* against this *higher* type of person; it has banned the basic instincts of this type” (*A*, 5).

To keep this sketch sketchy, Nietzsche holds that Christianity is a strategy within Judaism and part of its long-range strategy. The decisive battle is not between Jews and Christians but between the slavish morality common to both Jews and Christians—and the master morality of those capable of living a fully human life.

The Judeo-Christian moral code becomes part of their revenge strategy. Its point is to enable the weaker to survive in a harsh world in which they are often on the receiving end of the big stick—but also to undermine the master-type’s confidence in themselves and eventually to subdue and bring down the masters so as to exact a

spiritual revenge (*BGE*, 219; *GM*, 1:7, 1:10, 1:15).

As evidence, Nietzsche paraphrases standard Judeo-Christian rhetoric about how their kingdom shall come some day and God will then visit his wrath upon the rich and powerful. In a perfect catch, he quotes St. Thomas Aquinas: “In order that the bliss of the saints may be more delightful for them and that they may render more copious thanks to God for it, it is given to them to see perfectly the punishment of the damned” (*GM*, 1:15n.).<sup>2</sup>

So we have Nietzsche’s views on the morality of altruism. It is a two-fold strategy of slave-types: (1) a survival code for the weak; and (2) as revenge and a power play against the strong.

Historically, in Nietzsche’s judgment there is no question who is winning the age-old battle between the weak and the strong. He takes Tertullian’s question—“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”—and substitutes Rome for Athens, Rome being the greatest empire of classical times, Rome’s values thus being the antipode of Jerusalem’s (*GM*, 1:16). As evidence of whether Rome or Judea is winning, he invites us to consider to whom we kneel down before in Rome today. In the nineteenth century, “everything is visibly becoming Judaized, Christian-ized, mob-ized” (*GM*, 1:9), and the chief slave—that is, the Pope—has for a long time established his camp and planted his flag in the center of what was the greatest master empire the world had ever seen (*GM*, 1:16).

So for Nietzsche the modern world is in a moral crisis. The code of the slaves, i.e., altruism, is ascendant and the moral code of the masters is in decline. The master code is the one that will best enable and foster human development, yet virtually everyone either believes altruism, pays lip service to it, or feels guilty about not living it.<sup>3</sup>

## Comparing Nietzsche’s and Rand’s Critiques of Altruism

For purposes of comparison of Nietzsche and Rand, let us distinguish five varieties of altruism, in increasing order of destructiveness:

- (1) Altruism as a policy of collectivism for the purpose of *mutual self support*;
- (2) Altruism as a tactic of the weak to *protect* themselves against the strong;

- (3) Altruism as a tactic of the weak to *get support* from the strong;
- (4) Altruism as a strategy of the weak to *get power over* the strong in order to rule them; and
- (5) Altruism as a strategy by the weak to *destroy* the strong out of envy, hatred, or revenge.

Nietzsche and Rand both recognize Type 1 altruism. History provides many examples of monastic and religious communities that isolate themselves and live communally. The key organizing concepts of such communities are collective assets, solidarity, and conformity. Both Nietzsche and Rand also recognize Type 2 altruism. Nietzsche regularly invokes herd-animal metaphors and examples to illustrate the instinctual or strategic practice of seeking safety in numbers against a qualitatively superior enemy. “All the sick and sickly instinctively strive after a herd organization as a means of shaking off their dull displeasure and feeling of weakness; the ascetic priest divines this and furthers it” (*GM*, 3:18). Rand illustrates Type 2 in *The Fountainhead* in the official philosophy Ellsworth Toohey uses when preaching to the masses—for example in his speech to the strikers of the building-trades union (*F*, I:9). The key concepts in Toohey’s speech are unity, the aggression of the owners, and the consequent role of unions as a self-protection agency to fight back.

Type 3 altruism appears in Nietzsche’s writings as a danger to the strong: The weak and the poor use altruistic morality as a tool to make the stronger serve them; that is a danger to the strong, Nietzsche argues, because it will sidetrack them from their proper self-development. “The sick represent the greatest danger for the healthy; it is *not* the strongest but the weakest who spell disaster for the strong.” Nietzsche’s reason for this is that “What is to be feared, what has a more calamitous effect than any other calamity, is that man should inspire not profound fear but profound *nausea*; also not great fear but great *pity*” (*GM*, III:14). Pity then leads the strong to feel obligations of charity, compassion, and to devote themselves to succor.

A parallel version of Type 3 altruism appears in Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*, in the case of the strategy that Rearden’s mother and brother pursue to ensure that he will continue to support them. They speak the language of obligation, pity, and compassion, and, despite his inarticulate reservations and inchoate feelings of ickiness, Rearden

accepts their implied demands on the terms they present.

Type 4 altruism is the altruism of power-lust. Nietzsche holds that all living beings embody and are driven by a will to power, but that the strategies pursued by the weaker must necessarily be more cunning. “The will of the weak to represent some form of superiority, their instinct for devious paths to tyranny over the healthy—where can it not be discovered, this will to power of the weakest!” (*GM*, 3:14). But unable to compete by means of *physical* vitality and vigor, the weak must employ *psychological* weapons: “the moral judgment” is the means by which the “weak and mediocre . . . weaken and pull down the stronger” (*WP*, 345).

Type 4 altruism is also prominent in both of Rand’s major novels. One sub-plot of *The Fountainhead* is the battle between Gail Wynand and Toohey. Wynand pursues the traditional “master” power strategy of physical wealth, including the physical intimidation of his business competitors, and the benefits wealth can bring; Toohey’s strategy is a more subtle and sneaky psychological route to power. A rare moment of self-revelation occurs late in the novel when Toohey explains his philosophy to a broken Peter Keating: “It’s only a matter of discovering the lever. If you learn how to rule one single man’s soul, you can get the rest of mankind. It’s the soul, Peter, the soul. Not whips or swords or fire or guns. That’s why the Caesars, the Attilas, the Napoleons were fools and did not last. We will. The soul, Peter, is that which can’t be ruled. It must be broken” (*F*, 4:14, 690). Toohey’s particular tactics to achieve the strategy are ones Nietzsche had outlined: use the slave morality to make the strong “sick, miserable, malevolent against himself: full of hatred against the springs of life, full of suspicion against all that was still strong and happy” (*TI*, 7:2; see also *GM*, 3:14). Toohey elaborates in detail: “There are many ways. Here’s one. Make man feel small. Make him feel guilty. Kill his aspiration and his integrity. . . . Preach selflessness. Tell man that he must live for others. Tell man that altruism is the ideal. Not a single one of them has ever achieved it and not a single one ever will. His every living instinct screams against it. But don’t you see what you accomplish? Man realizes that he’s incapable of what he’s accepted as the noblest virtue—and it gives him a sense of guilt, of sin, of his own basic unworthiness” (*F*, 4:14, 690). Guilty individuals are weakened and much easier to manipulate and rule.

Early in *Atlas*, Rand introduces Type 4 altruism in the exchange between Rearden and Francisco at Rearden's anniversary party, when Francisco attempts to warn Rearden of the real battle he is fighting. Rearden responds dismissively: "A battle? What battle? I hold the whip hand. I don't fight the disarmed." Francisco replies: "Are they? They have a weapon against you. It's their only weapon, but it's a terrible one. Ask yourself what it is, some time" (*AS*, I:6, 148).

Type 5 altruism is the most disturbing and terminal case of altruism, and both Nietzsche and Rand see it operative in many individuals and movements. Type 4 altruism is about achieving power in order to rule. Yet the desire to rule is still a positive goal. Type 5 is about getting power as a means purely to destroy the good and the great. It is this type of altruism, because of its utter malevolence, that gives pause to many thoughtful and well-meaning interpreters of Nietzsche and Rand and leads them to wonder whether Nietzsche and Rand exaggerate their enemies' positions.

Nietzsche is explicit: "Moral judgments and condemnations constitute the favorite *revenge* of the spiritually limited against those less limited" (*BGE*, 219; emphasis added), and in its extreme form the rage of the weak and impotent erupts into nihilism: "When some men fail to accomplish what they desire to do they exclaim angrily, 'May the whole world perish!' This repulsive emotion is the pinnacle of envy, whose implication is 'If I cannot have *something*, no one can have *anything*, no one is to *be* anything!'" (*D*, 304). To bring the strong down to their level, he argues, the weak use the language of the altruist ethic: "when would they achieve the ultimate, subtlest, sublimest triumph of revenge? Undoubtedly if they succeeded in *poisoning the consciences* of the fortunate with their own misery, with all misery, so that one day the fortunate began to be ashamed of their good fortune and perhaps said one to another: 'it is disgraceful to be fortunate: *there is too much misery!*'" (*GM*, 3:14). The goal is not to use pain and misery to induce the strong to help *solve* the problems of those in pain and misery; the goal is to *inflict* the same pain and misery on the strong. That is revenge: to subject one's enemy to the same torments.

In religious uses of the altruistic ethic, on this Nietzschean interpretation, the purpose of Heaven and Hell is not a relatively benevolent two-pronged strategy of inspiring goodness by the carrot

of Heaven and the stick of Hell. Rather the purpose is to send one's enemies to Hell. Here again Nietzsche's quoting St. Thomas Aquinas is relevant: "In order that the bliss of the saints may be more delightful for them and that they may render more copious thanks to God for it, it is given to them to see perfectly the punishment of the damned" (*GM*, 1:15n.).

In *Atlas*, Rand provides many examples of Type 5 altruism. Lillian Rearden's treatment of Hank is not a misguided attempt to get attention or to repair a failing marriage—it is a constant attack on Rearden's identity and worth. The same is true of James Taggart's treatment of his wife Cherryl: his goal is to destroy her "childish" and "naive" belief in the nobility of man. Taggart's strategy was only semi-explicit to himself during most of *Atlas*, but Rand has Taggart realize its full import consciously toward the end of *Atlas* during the torture of John Galt. Knowing that further torturing Galt will kill him, thus destroying Galt's ability to help them, Taggart exclaims: "I don't care! I want to break him! I want to hear him scream! I want—." Rand the narrator goes on to explain Taggart's nihilistic self-revelation: "It was not his incommunicable soul or his love for others or his social duty or any of the fraudulent sounds by which he had maintained his self-esteem: it was the lust to destroy whatever was living" (*AS*, III:9, 1145).

This sub-theme in *Atlas* is continuous with Rand's earlier novel, *The Fountainhead*. Toohey explains further to Keating the real strategic purpose behind his various power tactics of communal organizing, his critique of individual creativity, the promotion of mediocrities such as Keating, and so on. Keating asks whinily, "What do you want?" Toohey snaps. "Howard Roark's neck." Toohey then elaborates: "I don't want to kill him. I want him in jail. You understand? In jail. In a cell. Behind bars. Locked, stopped, strapped—and alive" (*F*, 4:13, 688). Toohey is not seeking any positive value, only the destruction of an excellent human being.

Toohey is a fictional character, of course, but it is worth remembering Nietzsche's nonfictional quoting of Aquinas, as above, and that Aquinas is in "good" company, so to speak. Nine centuries earlier, St. Augustine (426 CE/1984, "The Saints' Knowledge of the Punishment of the Wicked," 943) had included the spectacle of Hell as one of the viewing pleasures for those in Heaven: "the good go out to see the

punishment of the wicked . . . so as to witness the torments of the wicked in their bodily presence.” Two centuries earlier, Church father Tertullian (c. 197–202 CE/1931) had exulted over the destruction of the world and the torments of kings, philosophers, poets, and athletes in Hell:

that last day of judgment, with its everlasting issues; that day unlooked for by the nations, the theme of their derision, when the world hoary with age, and all its many products, shall be consumed in one great flame! How vast a spectacle then bursts upon the eye! What there excites my admiration? What my derision? Which sight gives me joy? Which rouses me to exultation?—as I see so many illustrious monarchs, whose reception into the heavens was publicly announced, groaning now in the lowest darkness with great Jove himself, and those, too, who bore witness of their exultation; governors of provinces, too, who persecuted the Christian name, in fires more fierce than those with which in the days of their pride they raged against the followers of Christ. What world’s wise men besides, the very philosophers, in fact, who taught their followers that God had no concern in aught that is sublunary, and were wont to assure them that either they had no souls, or that they would never return to the bodies which at death they had left, now covered with shame before the poor deluded ones, as one fire consumes them! Poets also, trembling not before the judgment-seat of Rhadamanthus or Minos, but of the unexpected Christ! I shall have a better opportunity than of hearing the tragedians, louder-voiced in their own calamity; of viewing the play-actors, much more ‘dissolute’ in the dissolving flame; of looking upon the charioteer, all glowing in his chariot of fire; of beholding the wrestlers, not in their gymnasias, but tossing in the fiery billows . . . (1931/written 197–200 CE, *De Spectaculis*, 297, 299)

And jumping forward to five centuries after Aquinas, American “Great Awakening” leader, Jonathan Edwards, he of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”-fame, delivered a 1739 sermon entitled

“The Eternity of Hell Torments” with the following affirmation: “The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever.” And: “Can the believing husband in Heaven be happy with his unbelieving wife in Hell? Can the believing father in Heaven be happy with his unbelieving children in Hell? Can the loving wife be happy in Heaven with her unbelieving husband in Hell? I tell you, yea! Such will be their sense of justice that it will increase rather than decrease their bliss” (“The Eternity of Hell Torments,” 1739). That many advocates of altruistic ethics are motivated explicitly by the desire to destroy is not only the stuff of exaggeration or fiction.

To summarize: thus far, it is clear that Rand has learned from Nietzsche’s critique of altruism and is in agreement with its general thrust.

### Rand’s Break with Nietzsche’s Critique

If we follow the Nietzschean interpretation, then the great battle in history is the struggle between the strong and the weak. Nietzsche’s position is based on seeing the weak and the strong as essentially in a zero-sum situation from which there is no escape: the strong are objectively a threat to the weak, so the weak must treat them as such; the weak are necessarily consumed with envy and resentment of the strong, so their best satisfaction can only come from pulling the strong down. The Nietzschean thesis can then be put apparently paradoxically: *Altruism is the egoism of the weak*. It is their best weapon in the ongoing battle for survival against the strong. Slave morality, Nietzsche writes in *Genealogy of Morals*, is “the prudence of the lowest order” (*GM*, I:13).

To switch to Rand’s language, the Nietzschean thesis is that the great battle is the battle between the Gail Wynands of the world and the Ellsworth Tooheys of the world. Both Wynand and Toohey seek power, but by different means. The Wynands use traditional “selfishness”’s tools of money and physical prowess, while the Tooheys use altruism’s psychological tools of guilt and pity. The great breakthrough of *The Fountainhead* is to show that dichotomy to be a false alternative.

Here Rand both strongly diverges from Nietzsche and is innovative in ethics. Altruism, she argues, is *not* the egoism of the weak. Altruism is *destructive to both* weak and strong. Howard Roark’s

strategy is neither to side with the Wynands against the Tooheys nor to side with the Tooheys against the Wynands; Roark's strategy is independent creative production and trade with those who recognize his value as an independent creator and producer.

Perhaps not everyone can be as creative and productive as a Roark. For Rand the fact of inequalities of abilities does not change the moral facts involved. The egoism of the weak, in contrast to Nietzsche's thesis, is to *respect* and *admire* the strong, to promote their freedom, and to be aware of the overflow benefits to come to them from the strong. The average person may not be able to design and build as well as Roark can; yet thousands of average people can, with productive effort, earn the money in order to live in one of Roark's buildings, and thousands more get the aesthetic benefit of seeing Roark's buildings even if they do not get to live in them.

In *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand uses the example of a janitor who makes a decent living working in a factory. The janitor did not create a factory, including its ability to pay his salary. The janitor adds value to the enterprise and so earns his pay: he is a value to the factory's creators. At the same time, the factory's creators have added value to his life: the opportunity to make a living at that job. The abilities and skill sets differ, and there is a harmony of values that enables win-win trade. That, Rand argues, is the fundamental truth about the relationship between stronger and weaker: properly conceived, it can and should be mutually beneficial. Rand puts it this way in Galt's speech:

In proportion to the mental energy he spent, the man who creates a new invention receives but a small percentage of his value in terms of material payment, no matter what fortune he makes, no matter what millions he earns. But the man who works as a janitor in the factory producing that invention, receives an enormous payment in proportion to the mental effort that his job requires of him. And the same is true of all men between, on all levels of ambition and ability. The man at the top of the intellectual pyramid contributes the most to all those below him, but gets nothing except his material payment, receiving no intellectual bonus from others to add to the value of his time. The man at the bottom who, left to himself, would starve in his hopeless ineptitude,

contributes nothing to those above him, but receives the bonus of all of their brains. Such is the nature of the ‘competition’ between the strong and the weak of the intellect. Such is the pattern of ‘exploitation’ for which you have damned the strong.<sup>4</sup> (*AS* III:7, 1065)

The janitor who hates his boss on principle or who sees the factory’s creators as his enemies has made an error—a self-destructive misjudgment about his own self-interest. In *Atlas Shrugged*, for example, Dagny Taggart is not the enemy of Eddie Willers; nor is Eddie Willers the enemy of Pop Harper, the chief clerk; nor is Pop Harper the enemy of an anonymous line worker far below in the underground terminal.

Nor are any of us the enemies of the geniuses who create in music, business, technology, art, athletics, or philosophy. The idea that those of us who have lesser abilities in any of those areas should want to control or destroy those who are superior is stupidly self-destructive to the highest degree.

Yet Nietzsche’s commitment to a fundamental adversarial zero-sum position does commit him to the view that altruism is to the self-interest of the weaker. It yields the implication that if one has less musical talent, then one’s self-interest is that the Beethovens and Rachmaninoffs be destroyed (recalling the fictional portrayal of Antonio Salieri in Peter Shaffer and Milos Forman’s *Amadeus*)—that if one has less athletic talent, that the Babe Ruths and Michael Jordans be handicapped (recalling the pathetically real-life example of Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan)—that if one is a so-so businessman, that the John D. Rockefellers and Bill Gateses be bridled (recalling the language invoked in most antitrust debates about the dangers of “unbridled” competition). This is a striking and fundamental difference between Nietzsche’s and Rand’s interpretations of altruism.<sup>5</sup>

Rand also believes that the egoism of the less-talented is to respect *themselves*—for their potential and for their committing to achieving it. Not everyone can be a Michael Jordan. But the measure of a good life is not primarily comparative—it is a matter of making one’s own independent choices, forming one’s own character and interests, making one’s own way in the world in whatever way suits

one best and to whatever degree one's energies and abilities allow. It is not the scale of one's abilities that is primarily morally significant; it is the fact that one's abilities are *one's own* abilities and that one has *committed* to using them to achieve *one's own* life. In that respect, being a moral giant is within the reach of any of us. Altruism, by contrast, encourages the less-talented to *disrespect* themselves, to make comparative judgments as fundamental to their self-worth, to see themselves as relatively helpless or as victims, and to plot and act against the more talented.

In Part One of this essay, we have concentrated on the negative—that is, Nietzsche's and Rand's critiques of altruism. Now we will turn to their positive programs—i.e., what they take a proper egoism to entail.

## **Part Two: On Egoism**

In their critiques of altruism there is much overlap between Nietzsche's and Rand's views. In their beliefs about egoism, there is virtually none.

### **Rand's Egoism**

To see this, let us begin with a highly-abstracted list of twelve components that are integrated into Rand's advocacy of egoism:

- o The life of the individual is the standard of value.
- o Values are objective—they are identifications of an individual's survival needs.
- o Individuals have free will.
- o The volitional capacity is the capacity for reason.
- o Reason is competent to know reality and is an individual's fundamental tool for surviving and flourishing.
- o Reason gives individuals the power to shape their characters, to develop or alter their habits, to control their actions.
- o The development of reason enables individuals to be creative producers, rather than merely hunter-gatherers from the environment or parasites upon each other.
- o Consequently, individuals are self-responsible both psychologically and existentially.
- o Consequently, individuals are both ends in themselves and the means to their own ends.

- o And consequently, in social relations, there are no fundamental conflicts of interest.
- o Individuals can and should fundamentally commit to social relations on the basis of win-win trade.
- o All individuals have rights that a moral social system will respect as fundamental.

Nietzsche rejects all twelve of the components in the above list. And, further, he casts doubt upon the belief that individuals even exist.

## Nietzsche's Rhetoric and System

In this context, the importance of more fundamental philosophy to determining the content of a philosopher's ethical system cannot be overstated in the case of comparing Nietzsche and Rand. Both philosophers developed full philosophical systems, and both argued explicitly the essential connections among all of the elements of their philosophies.

Some interpreters of Nietzsche are misled by his rhetorical choices, especially his use of apparently disconnected aphorisms. Nietzsche was aware of this rhetorical risk and took pains to warn his readers against it, explaining that his purpose was not to do the reader's work for him by, in the manner of a schoolteacher, leading him step-by-step to a conclusion. Instead, a philosopher learns by doing—by taking Nietzsche's often-compressed aphorisms and unpacking and re-packing them, by trying them out in various combinations, or, to put the point unflatteringly, by being a cow. Nietzsche's aphorisms to a philosopher should be like grass to a cow—something to be chewed into cud, swallowed, and regurgitated for more chewing, swallowed again and processed through several stomachs in order to extract the value. A philosopher is a *ruminant* (*GM*, Preface:8).

Nietzsche further urges the importance of system, again not in mechanical terms but rather in his overall philosophy's organic terms: "We have no right to *isolated* acts of any kind: we may not make isolated errors or hit upon isolated truths. Rather do our ideas, our values, our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts, grow out of us with the necessity with which a tree bears fruit—related and each with an affinity to each, and evidence of *one* will, *one* health, *one* soil, *one* sun"

(*GM*, Preface:2).

Yet we will not here begin with soil chemistry and root development. Rather I will simply assert (and be prepared to argue on another occasion) that Nietzsche's metaphysics and epistemology are radically different from Rand's, and that those differences lead to substantial differences and outright oppositions in their views of human nature and ethics. As evidence of the latter, we will sample representative quotations that indicate that Nietzsche's and Rand's positive ethical systems are at the very least not members of the same species and more likely not even members of the same genus.

### **The Major Differences between Nietzsche and Rand Are Individuals Real?**

If one is to be an advocate of self interest, it would be good to start by affirming that selves in fact exist.

For Rand, individual selves are real, and their core capacities should be integrated. Humans are mind-body integrates. Consciousness is both supported by the rest of the self and directs the self. An individual's sensory and perceptual capacities are integrated. Their perceptual and rational capacities are and should be integrated. Their rational and emotional capacities are connected and should be integrated. The life of an individual is and should be a unified whole. Nietzsche argues the opposite: the human being is the combat of "a vast confusion of contradictory valuations and consequently of contradictory drives" (*WP*, 259). With respect to the role of consciousness, Nietzsche asserts that consciousness is not "the unity of the organism" (*GS*, 11). And he suggests strongly that we should dispense altogether with talk of individual selves: "The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary" (*WP*, 490). "For the individual, the 'single man,' as people and philosophers have hitherto understood him, is an error; he does not constitute a separate entity, an atom, a 'link in the chain,' something merely inherited from the past—he constitutes the entire single line 'man' up to and including himself" (*TI*, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 33).

In contrast to Rand, then, for whom the individual is the unit of reality and moral significance, the above quotations suggest that to Nietzsche the "individual" is a conflicted and historically-collective vehicle through which biological evolution is working.

## Do Individuals Have Free Will?

Egoism is a thesis about morality. The existence of morality presupposes that moral agents make choices for which they can be held responsible. That presupposes that moral agents have the capacity of making choices. Rand argues this to be true of humans—man’s reason is a volitional capacity, one that is itself a species of causality along with the various other species of mechanical and biological causality that exist.

Whatever we take individual selves to be in Nietzsche’s system, there is less uncertainty about his position on volition: he rejects it. We are, he writes, before “a brazen wall of fate; we are in prison, we can only dream ourselves free, not make ourselves free” (*HA*, 2:33). Further, as quoted above: “the single human being is a piece of *fatum* from the front and from the rear, one law more, one necessity more for all that is yet to come and to be” (*TI*, 5:6). And again: “the voluntary is absolutely lacking . . . everything has been directed along certain lines from the beginning” (*WP*, 458). He ridicules the idea of volitional self-causation: “the concept of a *causa sui* is something fundamentally absurd” (*BGE*, 15). In this respect, humans are no different from any other biological species: “A man as he *ought* to be: that sounds to us as insipid as ‘a tree as it ought to be’” (*WP*, 332).

This has implications for character-development. In contrast to Rand’s belief that “man is a being of self-made soul” and that men can be evaluated morally according to their choices and achievements, Nietzsche asserts a biological determinism: “It cannot be effaced from a man’s soul what his ancestors have preferably and most constantly done” (*BGE*, 264). And evaluatively: “There is only aristocracy of birth, only aristocracy of blood” (*WP*, 942). As a result, it would make little sense for Nietzsche to make *moral* judgments of “good” or “evil” about individuals; instead, Nietzsche’s language is consistently populated by biomedical terms of “healthy” or “sick,” along with aesthetic judgments of “beautiful” and “disgusting,” both the biomedical and the aesthetic language to be purged of moral connotations. “Is it virtuous when a cell transforms itself into a function of a stronger cell? It has no alternative. Is it evil when a stronger cell assimilates the weaker? It also has no alternative; it follows necessity . . .” (*GS*, 118; also: “Weakness of the will: that is a simile that can mislead. For there is no will, and consequently

neither a strong nor a weak will. The multiplicity and disgregation of the impulses, the lack of system among them results in a ‘weak will’; their coordination under the dominance of a single one results in a ‘strong will’” (*WP*, 46).

So, in contrast to Rand, to the extent that Nietzsche is a biological determinist, he cannot be an advocate of *ethical* egoism. At most, he could be an advocate of *psychological* egoism.

### **What is the Source of Moral Values?**

Rand is among the few philosophers until recently who have argued that moral values are naturalistic and objective. Nietzsche is a pioneer in making ethics a naturalistic discipline, but he rejects moral objectivism and argues for a radical subjectivity. In part, this is a consequence of his general epistemological subjectivism: “*Genuine philosophers,*” he writes, “*are commanders and legislators: they say, ‘thus it shall be!’ . . . Their ‘knowing’ is creating, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is—will to power*” (*BGE*, 211). And in part his subjectivism is a consequence of his biological determinism: “it is always necessary to draw forth . . . the physiological phenomenon behind the moral predispositions and prejudices” (*D*, 542). When we do so, we learn that “our moral judgments and evaluations . . . are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us” (*D*, 119).

All of this is in stark contrast to the thesis of the author of “The Objectivist Ethics” (*VOS*), and logically leads to further differences in content and method.

### **How Does the Self Identify its Nature and Values?**

Another such difference concerns the role of reason in Nietzsche’s and Rand’s ethical systems. For Rand, reason is one of the cardinal values and rationality is the primary virtue. It is reason that is an individual’s primary means of survival. Developed and used well, it is a powerful tool by which humans can develop themselves and transform their world. Reason, again properly used, shapes one’s passions and should work harmoniously with them; if there is a conflict between the two, though, reason should prevail, for of the two only reason is a tool of cognition, and action in the world should be governed by an individual’s best cognitive grasp of the world.

For Nietzsche, by contrast, thinking is both derivative of passions and a less significant source of guidance for action. Thinking, he argues, is only “the form in which we come to feel” (*GS*, 333). The human being is a collection of (conflicting, as above) instinctual biological drives, and those drives manifest themselves psychologically in the forms of felt passions and desires; some of those passions and desires further manifest themselves as conscious, rational experiences. As such, conscious rational judgments are hardly to be regarded as legislative of action. Since reason and consciousness as a whole are Johnny-come-lately capacities, they are less reliable than the instinctual capacities and drives that have served us well for millennia. Nietzsche expresses pity for humans as they have come to rely more on reason: “in this new world they no longer possessed their former guides, their regulating, unconscious and infallible drives: they were reduced to thinking, inferring, reckoning, co-ordinating cause and effect, these unfortunate creatures; they were reduced to their ‘consciousness,’ their weakest and most fallible organ!” (*GM*, II:16). In most cases, Nietzsche holds, reason is at best rationalization, and as a general policy of action, it is an either-or alternative: “‘Rationality’ against instinct” (*EH*, *The Birth of Tragedy*:1).

Consequently, while Rand exalts the power of reason and makes its exercise fundamental to her ethics of egoism, Nietzsche is mostly dismissive of the whole apparatus of consciousness, reason included, and exalts “unconscious and infallible drives.” So while Rand advocates *rational* self interest, Nietzsche does not.

### **Are Individual Selves Ends in Themselves?**

The key normative thesis of egoism is that individuals are ends in themselves. They are not merely tools, servants, or slaves of other individuals or alleged higher beings or institutions. Individuals exist for their own sake.

The oath taken by the inhabitants of Galt’s Gulch is Rand’s literary statement of egoism: “I swear—by my life and my love of it—that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine” (*AS*, 1069).

Those who reject egoism argue that individuals are not ends in themselves, that individuals exist as a means to some other end.

By this criterion, Nietzsche is not an egoist at all. For Nietzsche,

the value of an individual is measured in terms of that individual's ability to advance the species. Here is a quotation from *Twilight of the Idols*:

The value of egoism depends on the physiological value of him who possesses it: it can be very valuable, it can be worthless and contemptible. Every individual may be regarded as representing the ascending or descending line of life. When one has decided which, one has thereby established a canon for the value of his egoism. If he represents the ascending line his value is in fact extraordinary—and for the sake of the life-collective, which with him takes a step *forward*, the care expended on his preservation, on the creation of optimum conditions for him, may even be extreme. (*TI*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 33)

Note that the advance of “the life-collective” is the standard of value, not the advance of the individual. If an individual contributes to the advance of the life-collective, then egoism is an appropriate policy for that individual.

Continuing the same quotation, Nietzsche makes it clear that egoism is bad in the case of most other individuals. Most individuals, we recall, are a disgrace to Nietzsche's aspirations for the species, and so egoism is the wrong policy to urge upon them: “If he represents a declining line—then he has little value: and the first demand of justice is that he take as little room, force and sunshine from the well bred as possible. In this case society has the duty of suppressing egoism” (*TI*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 33). Nietzsche does not here explain what methods society might use to suppress egoism. But the point is clear: for the large majority of the human population, Nietzsche is anti-egoistic: “To ordinary human beings, finally—the vast majority who exist for service and the general advantage, and who *may* exist only for that” (*BGE*, 61). And more ruthlessly: “mankind in the mass sacrificed to the prosperity of a single *stronger* species of man—that *would* be an advance” (*GM*, II:12).

For all that Nietzsche attacks Christianity's altruism, a striking point is that one of his later criticisms of Christianity is that it is too egoistic: it is too individualistic, seeing each human being as precious

and as not to be sacrificed for the good of the species. Consequently, he warns, “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). The value of egoism, then, is to Nietzsche measured by evaluating the individual’s capacity for advancing the species.

Even for those rare, higher individuals, self-sacrifice is for Nietzsche their highest calling, for it is through their sacrifices that the better kind of man will come into being: “I love those who sacrifice themselves for the earth, that the earth may some day become the overman’s” (*Z*, I.P.3).

So while one can find many passages in Nietzsche in praise of egoism, those passages must be interpreted as being directed only to a few, exceptional individuals, not the vast majority of individuals—and in the context of knowing that for Nietzsche those individuals are themselves only the means to a higher end, an end for which they should sacrifice themselves when necessary. Nietzsche’s egoism is thus severely limited in scope and nested within a broader expectation of sacrifice for an end beyond man.

### **Are Fundamental Values Universal?**

Two closely-related points are at work here. One is that Nietzsche’s standard of value is *collectivist*: that which is species-advancing. The other is that since he divides the species into two basic types—the master- and slave-types—the value of the egoist code is *relative* to the values of the two human types. By contrast, Rand’s ethic is *individualist* and *universalist*: her standard of value is the life of the individual, and the egoist code is the appropriate code for all individuals.

Nietzsche’s subjectivism also contributes to his relativism. As above, he argues that moral codes are conscious projections of psycho-physiological types, with different types projecting different codes, the master and slave codes being two basic types. If one is more master-like, the master code will feel right and the slave code disgusting; and if one is more slave-like, the slave code will feel right and the master code frightening. Nietzsche denies an objective criterion or perspective by which to evaluate codes, so one can, it seems, evaluate codes only subjectively. Justice, for example, “is by

all means a matter of taste, nothing more” (*GS*, 184).

Yet Nietzsche often does also adopt an implicit (lower-case “o”) objectivist stance in claiming that the slave code represents a decline of the species and urging the redevelopment of master codes as the only route to genuine human improvement. “The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach out beyond it” (*WP*, 287) and those few of us with master potential should live a code that enables the development of that potential.

So there is a core problem remaining for Nietzsche scholarship: Is Nietzsche arguing with a forked tongue, so to speak, holding that slave values are objectively bad *and* that his revulsion toward them is only a subjective response on his part? Is his sympathy to master values merely an expression of his bio-physiology *and* a recommendation of a code that is in fact best for humanity?

### **Are the Relations of Individuals Win/Win or Win/Lose?**

Rand’s ethic is striking for its argument that no conflicts of interest exist among rational human beings. Self-responsible, productive individuals are value creators, and it is to the mutual self-interest of all such individuals that other such individuals exist and flourish (“The ‘Conflicts’ of Men’s Interests,” *VOS*). The basic principle of social interaction, then, is the principle of voluntary, mutually-beneficial exchange—what Rand called the “trader principle” in her notes for Galt’s Speech (*JAR*, 584).

For Nietzsche, by strong contrast, “Culture absolutely cannot do without passions, vices, and acts of malice” (*HA*, 477). Conflicts of interest are fundamental and inescapable:

Here one must think profoundly to the very basis and resist all sentimental weakness: life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation—but why should one for ever use precisely these words on which for ages a disparaging purpose has been stamped? (*BGE*, 259)

Again: “people now rave everywhere, even under the guise of

science, about coming conditions of society in which ‘the exploiting character’ is to be absent:—that sounds to my ear as if they promised to invent a mode of life which should refrain from all organic functions” (*BGE*, 259).

Any code, then, requires the sacrifice of some for the benefit of others. The altruist code calls for the sacrifice of the strong to the weak, and the egoist code is simply the converse: “There is no egoism that remains by itself and does not encroach . . . ‘One furthers one’s I always at the expense of others’” (*WP*, 369). And putting the point in terms of Nietzsche opposition of the master and slave moralities, “The well-being of the majority and the well-being of the few are opposite viewpoints of value” (*GM*, end of First Essay note). Consequently, rather than committing to peaceful and voluntary trade with others, Nietzsche urges war, at least metaphorically, in the following famous “Live dangerously” quotation: “the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is—to *live dangerously!* Build your cities under Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves!” (*GS*, 283).

### **Rights, Liberty, Equality Before the Law?**

All of the above differences between Nietzsche and Rand naturally lead to major differences in social and political philosophy. Rand’s strong advocacy of individual rights is a consequence of her egoism: individuals’ lives are their own to live, and the mutual recognition of that fact is an objective value to individuals in a social context; rights are “the concept that preserves and protects individual morality in a social context” (“Man’s Rights,” *VOS*, 93). That mutual recognition is best institutionalized in the form of explicit rights that apply universally and are protected equally: “A complex legal system, based on *objectively* valid principles, is required to make a society free and keep it free” (“The Nature of Government,” *VOS*, 113). Rand’s ethical egoism is thus integrated with her political liberalism.<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche, by direct and accurate contrast, proclaims that he is “not by any means ‘liberal’” (*GS*, 377). Liberalism is only one more manifestation of the slave morality: “Liberalism: in plain language, *reduction to the herd animal.*” (*TI*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 38). The freedom of the large majority of human beings, Nietzsche

believes, is an obstacle to the advancement of the species. In the first part of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche complains that “All-too-many live, and all-too-long they hang on their branches. Would that a storm came to shake all this worm-eaten rot from the tree!” (Z, First Part).

The state is the creation of “a conqueror- and master-race which, organized for war and with the force to organize unhesitatingly lays its terrible claws upon a populace perhaps tremendously superior in numbers but still formless and wandering” (*GM*, II:17). This is not a bad thing, for a healthy ruling class “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). But good conscience has been poisoned by the slave morality, so Nietzsche’s “serious” goal, as he puts it, is “the cultivation of a new caste that will rule Europe” (*BGE*, 251).

Consequently, while Rand argues forcefully for the equality of rights and equality before the law—“‘Equality,’ in a human context, is a political term: it means equality before the law, the equality of fundamental, inalienable rights which every man possesses by virtue of his birth as a human being, and which may not be infringed or abrogated by man-made institutions, such as titles of nobility or the division of men into castes established by law, with special privileges granted to some and denied to others” (“The Age of Envy,” *NL* 164)—Nietzsche argues the exact opposite: “For the preservation of society, for making possible higher and highest types—the inequality of rights is the condition” (*A*, 57).

## **Slavery and Freedom, War and Peace**

The vocabulary of slavery and war are regular and, given the above, logically consequential features of Nietzsche’s writings.

Rand’s condemnation of slavery is clear. She praises the Enlightenment system that “drove slavery out of the civilized world” (*AS*, II:10, 679). She singles out the United States for praise—“The nation that ran an underground railroad to help human beings escape from slavery” (“Don’t Let It Go,” Part 2, *ARL* 1:5, 6 December 1971). She recognizes the stain of slavery in parts of early America: “Certainly, slavery was an enormous evil. But a country that fought a civil war to abolish slavery, has atoned for it” (“Moral Inflation,” Part 3, *ARL* 3:14, 8 April 1974). And she identifies slavery’s great immorality in its

violations of individual rights: “No people and no country has the *right* to choose a system of slavery: there can be no such thing as the right to violate rights” (“The Shanghai Gesture,” Part 2, *ARL* 1:14, 10 April 1972). The moral and political codes that liberate men are for Rand among the highest achievements of civilization.

Nietzsche, by contrast, holds that progressive society “needs slavery in some sense or other” (*BGE*, 257). What sense or other? He is sometimes vague, seeking “a noble mode of thought . . . that believes in slavery and in many degrees of subjection as the presupposition of every higher culture” (*WP*, 464) or wondering “to what extent a sacrifice of freedom, even enslavement itself, gives the basis for the bringing-forth of a *higher type*” (*WP*, 859). Yet in other cases Nietzsche is well past the stage of wondering and advocates slavery in all forms: “Slavery is, as it seems, both in the cruder and in the more subtle sense, the indispensable means of spiritual discipline and cultivation, too” (*BGE*, 190). For the vast number of individuals who have no value in themselves, Nietzsche is open to their having some value as tools to be used by the master-types to bring about species-advancing ends.

On issues of war and peace, Nietzsche and Rand are again fundamentally opposed.

The system of individual rights, Rand argues, is “the only system that bans force from social relationships. By the nature of its basic principles and interests, it is the only system fundamentally opposed to war” (“The Roots of War,” *CUI*, 37). As a matter of moral principle, individual rights ban the use of force, except in cases of self-defense. As a matter of interests, individuals living in systems of individual rights develop trading relationships, and peace is to the interest of traders while war is destructive of trade. Rand points to the relatively-free, capitalist nineteenth-century as historical evidence: “Let those who are actually concerned with peace observe that *capitalism gave mankind the longest period of peace in history*—a period during which there were no wars involving the entire civilized world—from the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914” (“The Roots of War,” *CUI*, 38).<sup>7</sup>

War, for Nietzsche, is an indispensable tool. Those attempting to survive and advance in a general zero-sum world cannot, on principle, rule out war and often should embrace war as a strategic

instrument. “One must learn from war: . . . one must learn to sacrifice many and to take one’s cause seriously enough not to spare men” (*WP*, 982).

Nietzsche also praises war’s psychological benefits in developing a better kind of man. “I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all. For this age shall prepare the way for one yet higher, and it shall gather the strength that this higher age will require one day—the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and that will wage wars for the sake of ideas and their consequences” (*GS*, 283). The horrific religious wars of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation were, for Nietzsche, a major achievement for men: “Religious war has signified the greatest progress of the masses hitherto; for it proves that the mass has begun to treat concepts with respect” (*GS*, 144). War thus has been a symptom and means of the elevation of mankind, and, Nietzsche argues, it is absolutely necessary for that end:

*War essential.*—It is vain rhapsodizing and sentimentality to continue to expect much (even more, to expect a very great deal) from mankind, once it has learned not to wage war. For the time being, we know of no other means to imbue exhausted peoples, as strongly and surely as every great war does, with that raw energy of the battleground, that deep impersonal hatred, that murderous coldbloodedness with a good conscience, that communal, organized ardor in destroying the enemy, that proud indifference to great losses, to one’s own existence and to that of one’s friends. That muted, earthquakelike convulsion of the soul. (*HA*, 477)

Consequently, Nietzsche has nothing but scorn for the trade-and-peace liberals of his day: “Our liberal representatives, as is well known, lack the time for reflecting on the nature of man: else they would know that they work in vain when they work for a ‘gradual decrease of the military burden’” (*WS*, 284).

## Conclusion

My hope is that this essay will contribute to putting to rest the traditional, widespread, and careless identifications of Nietzsche’s and

Rand's ethical philosophies—and to stronger interpretations of similarities and differences between the two. Nietzsche has acquired his place in the history-of-philosophy canon, and Rand is moving strongly in that direction. It is usual for that process, in the first generation or two, to be messy and marked with half-truths, under-researched speculations, cheap shots, and propaganda warfare.

Yet in the context of the history of philosophy, there *are* major similarities in Nietzsche's and Rand's ethical theories. Both are naturalists, which puts them on the same side against the supernaturalists and the nihilists. Both see ethics in functional terms, identifying the good with the practical and the healthy, which puts them on the same side against the deontologists and those who advocate an opposition between the moral and the practical. Both have great contempt for the "last man" and "social metaphysician" type of human being and hostility for altruism, which puts them on the same side against the conformists and the small-minded self-sacrificers.

Further, both Nietzsche and Rand embody a high romanticism—exalting life's challenges and noble quests. Both are philosophical and *literary* geniuses who integrate the content of their philosophies with brilliant romantic rhetoric. And in temperament both combine a gentle, delicate sensibility with a cold, hard, warrior edge. That puts them on the same side against fluffy sentimentalism and the turgid academic style common to much philosophical prose.

So there is certainly something to a first-glance, highly abstracted connection between Nietzsche's and Rand's views.

But a closer examination does not bear out that connection. On the negative issue—the critique of altruism—Nietzsche and Rand do not agree on the most important issue of whether altruism is the egoism of the weak. On the positive issue—the advocacy of egoism—it is not clear that Nietzsche believes in the existence of egos, and Nietzsche disagrees entirely with all twelve constituent elements of Rand's egoist philosophy. In consequence, they disagree entirely on the social and political implications of their ethical theories for issues of freedom or slavery, political equality or aristocracy, production and trade or war. And, while the issues are outside of the scope of this essay, Nietzsche and Rand disagree fundamentally on the issues of metaphysics, epistemology, and human nature; those disagreements lead logically to their radical divergences in ethics and politics.

Let me suggest one further moral-of-the-story of why Rand is still regularly lumped in with Nietzsche: That it is still hard for many thinkers to conceive of an egoism that is not zero-sum. Say that Rand is a realist, a naturalist, and an advocate of reason—and most people know what that means and can articulate those positions accurately. In the last generation or so, it has become increasingly possible to say that Rand is an advocate of capitalism and find that many people will understand what that means and that it is not necessarily vicious dog-eat-dog exploitation. But the same is not yet true when it comes to ethical egoism. Egoism to most still means stereotypical “selfishness,” and to many the only alternative is altruism. So there is still much work to do in overcoming the traditional false alternative.

### Abbreviations for Works Cited

<b>Nietzsche's works</b>	<b>Rand's works</b>
A <i>The Antichrist</i> (1888)	ARL <i>The Ayn Rand Letter</i> (1971–76)
BGE <i>Beyond Good &amp; Evil</i> (1886)	AS <i>Atlas Shrugged</i> (1957)
D <i>Daybreak</i> (1881)	CUI <i>Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal</i> (1966)
EH <i>Ecce Homo</i> (written 1888)	FNI <i>For the New Intellectual</i> (1961)
GM <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> (1887)	F <i>The Fountainhead</i> (1943)
GS <i>The Gay Science</i> (1882)	JAR <i>Journals of Ayn Rand</i> (1997)
HA <i>Human All-Too-Human</i> (1878)	NL <i>The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution</i> (1971)
TI <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> (1888)	VOS <i>The Virtue of Selfishness</i> (1964)
WP <i>The Will to Power</i> (unpublished in Nietzsche's lifetime)	
WS <i>The Wanderer and His Shadow</i> (1880)	
Z <i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i> (1883–85)	

## Notes

1. This is to define “altruism” neutrally, as against the common terminological confusion of labeling “altruist” any action that has a positive social result. Altruism is one thesis about what is necessary to achieve positive social results.

2. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q. 94, Articles 1 and 3: “Whether the blessed in heaven will see the sufferings of the damned?” and “Whether the blessed rejoice in the punishment of the wicked?” In Article 3, Aquinas qualifies the rejoicing by stating that it is in reaction to the justice of God’s punishment of the wicked.

3. Keeping in mind that toward the end of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche argues that the new masters will thus combine the physical vitality of the aristocratic masters with the spiritual ruthlessness of the slave-priests of Christianity: the new masters will be “Caesars with the soul of Christ” (*WP*, 983).

4. Rand later mentions the “pyramid of ability” in “The Establishing of an Establishment,” Part II, *ARL* 1:17 (22 May 1972), 76.

5. Nietzsche also advances another hypothesis about altruism, one that interprets it not as the egoism of the weak but the nihilism of the weak: “Not to seek one’s own advantage”—that is merely the moral fig leaf for quite a different, namely, a physiological state of affairs: ‘I no longer know how to find my own advantage.’ Disintegration of the instincts! Man is finished when he becomes altruistic. Instead of saying naively, ‘I am no longer worth anything,’ the moral lie in the mouth of the decadent says, ‘Nothing is worth anything, life is not worth anything.’ Such a judgment always remains very dangerous, it is contagious: throughout the morbid soil of society it soon proliferates into a tropical vegetation of concepts—now as a religion (Christianity), now as a philosophy (Schopenhaurism)” (*TI*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 35). *GS* 119 also speaks of those who desire only to be a function of others. Nietzsche thus seems to have two theses:

(1) Egoism is universal and natural since all organisms have the will to power; but not all are equal, so altruism is the power strategy pursued by the weak to achieve their egoism.

(2) Egoism is not universal, since some organisms are physiologically sick beyond repair; this causes a will to nothingness and a consequent moral nihilism; so altruism is the will to nothingness of the weak.

6. Here I am using “liberalism” in the philosophical sense, not the provincial American sense. Rand generally puts the word “liberal” in scare quotes when discussing its contemporary American use; for example, “‘Extremism’, or The Art of Smearing” (*CUI*, 178), and “The New Fascism: Rule by Consensus” (*CUI*, 209).

7. In a journal entry dated 2 January 1946, Rand had written that the period of peace was briefer—“During the eighteenth century the trend of men’s thinking was toward free enterprise, and as a result we got the nineteenth century—a period of achievement, progress and prosperity unequalled in history: a period during which there were fewer government controls than at any other time, before or since; and—most important to our subject—the longest period of peace ever recorded (between the times of Napoleon and Bismarck)” (“Top Secret,” Chapter 9 of *JAR*,

314–15).

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