Chapter II

Individualism
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INDIVIDUALISM

A widely shared belief in the dignity and worth of an individual has long been a distinctive feature of what we call Western civilization. As the medievalist Colin Morris well expressed the matter, “We [Westerners] think of ourselves as people with frontiers, our personalities divided from each other as our bodies visibly are.... It is to us a matter of common sense that we stand apart from the natural order in which we are set, subjects over against its objectivity, and that we have our own distinct personality, beliefs, and attitude to life.” But in fact, he continues, “Western individualism is so far from ‘expressing the common experience of humanity’ that it might more aptly be regarded as “an eccentricity among cultures.” And yet this “eccentricity” forms the indispensable basis for the ideas of liberty and equality, which are among the West’s chief gifts to humanity. Belief in the independent standing of the individual human being loses none of its central importance as a legitimizing principle of Western moral and political life.”

Rand defines individualism in an article entitled, ‘The Only Path to Tomorrow” and it is quoted by Barbara Branden in her book on Rand, The Passion of Ayn Rand
Man is an independent entity with an invaluable right to the pursuit of his happiness in a society where men deal with one another as equals in voluntary unregulated exchange and collectivism: the subjugation of the individual to a group—whether to a race, class or state does not matter. (163)

By her own accounts, Rand was a single-minded individualist from early childhood. She formed her ideals of human potential early. The principles upon which United States was founded, individual rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness were in Rand's mind the only proper basis for government. In Rand's major literary works exceptionally able and individualistic protagonist batters the forces of collectivism and mediocrity which is all threatening. Rand claims that man is not the collection of individuals that make-up mankind. It is hard to say who or, what a particular man represents. Man needs to be speculative and peculiar, Ayn Rand says that everything man needs has to be discovered by his own mind and preceded by his own effort.

In all the works of Rand the individual is the most important being in the universe. Neither the world nor country nor cause precedes the individual in Rand’s hierarchy of values. Rand has been incessant in her commitment to the primacy of self that man exists for his own sake and that pursuit of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose that he must not sacrifice himself to
others or others to himself. In *The Russian Radical* (Chris Matthew Sciabara), Rand says, “Mass men are not those who obeyed their own standards. Rather they submit to the dictates of others” (106). They are not genuine individuals in Rand’s view since they lack internally generated ideals. They cannot be free. Rand believed that no human quality such as freedom could be ‘disconnected from its content’.

Rand was developing a view of the individual that included not merely negative notions of freedom but positive notions of autonomy and self-responsibility. Autonomy demands that individuals achieve what they want by their own effort not by a mystical alliance with anything else. The person who attains his goal and power by catering to the masses is to be rejected as a slave to the masses.

Rand says that Man is the individualist, is a producer and originator who seeks independence and neither needs nor seeks power over other members nor can he made to work under any form of compulsion. Collectivism, altruism and mysticism all work against individual freedom, healthy ego and rationality. The major theme of Rand’s fiction is the primacy of the individual. Each individual is endowed with inalienable rights, the rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.
In Rand’s philosophy individualism has logical, ethical, political components. Rand’s individualism does not view any person as a means to an end in himself. She holds that each of us should value nothing higher than our own autonomous thinking and judgment. The rights to life, liberty, property, thinking and pursuit of happiness are the social expressions of individual's thirst for self-realization. The implication of Atlas Shrugged is that individual freedom is possible only to those who are strong enough, psychologically and morally. To withdraw this sanction from any system thrives off their productive energies. Rand asserts that each man is a sovereign individual who owns his person and that no man is a natural resource at the disposal of others. These distinctive features in turn reflect the fact that everyman is an end in himself and that individuals are not to be seen as members of pack each regarding the others as the means to his end. Each person's life is the ultimate value for that person that there is no higher value to which he should subsume his life and well being for others. His moral purpose is his own life and happiness. Rand emphasizes a value to the individual's characteristic traits such as repeatedly productive, honesty, integrity and independence. Each person's most satisfactory life includes the internalization of the principle that each person is an end in him.

Rand says that the idea of individualism is not new but nobody had defined a consistent and specific way to live by it in practice. It is their statements on morality that individualist thinkers have floundered and lost their
case. They had nothing better to offer than vulgar selfishness, which consisted of sacrificing self to others. When she realized that was only another form of collectivism of living through others by ruling them, she had the key to The Fountainhead. The key statement to the whole conception of The Fountainhead is in Roark’s speech “I wished to come here and say that I am a man who does not exist for others” (520).

Rand challenges us to recognize that society, which does not encourage individualism, invites a tyranny of bland mediocrity. Rand fears that centralized community state denies the individual members of his independence and gives them in exchange rules, orders and conformity. In the thirties, when the breakdown of American capitalism was so conspicuous, Rand’s overwhelming fear of anything collective harmonized with the American myth of rigged individualism and her fiction assumed a prophetic crisis. To combat that absolute lack of individuality, Rand’s heroes operate with an absolute lack of flexibility. New faith as individualism in all deepest meanings has never been preached before. A revival of the word ‘I’ is the holiest of holiest and the reason of reasons. The morality of individualism is the opposite of collectivism and it is in fact the only morality worthy of the name.

As long as the man lives self cannot be killed. All deceits prompted by vanity, all reaping of faked successes are a second hand acceptance of using
others and accepting the mind of neighbors. When a man shifts the centre of his life from his own ego to the expense of others, when those others become the determining factor, all his higher values become merely a possession of others to be used by him for money or physical gain, while he is cheating himself of those higher values and of all life's meaning, he is leading a second hand life. If man is to value his pride, his feeling of achievement, his personal glory is his glory. The worst of all crimes is the acceptance of the opinions of others. The worst men are those who say it is good, because others say it is good, they are men who lack ability or the courage to value on their own. Individualism is a complete new faith and man's morality must be individualism and objective reality demands individualism.

Ayn Rand underlines the virtues of individualism in the article 'The Moral basis of individualism' in the book *Journals of Ayn Rand* (David Harriman). Integrity- the first greatest and noblest of all virtues is a synonym of independence. Integrity is that quality in man which gives him the courage to hold his own convictions against all influences, against the opinions and desires of other men; the courage to remain whole, unbroken, untouched and remain true to himself. It is generally recognized that a man who is true to himself is a man to be admired. A man of integrity cannot place others above self and hence he is individualistic.
The virtue of courage is the strength to face any threat and to fight back. If, however, one places others above self, then it is evil to resist them and one must surrender if a conflict arises. But the man of courage and an individualist is the one who does not surrender.

The virtue of self-confidence is an individualistic trait. It is not confidence in others but confidence in one’s own ability, in one’s strength, one’s courage, one’s judgment and one’s vision.

The virtue of strength is quoted as an individualistic trait by Ayn Rand. The virtue of strength implies the strength of character, strength of will and strength of spirit. Love of freedom, sense of justice and virtue of wisdom are all the characteristic features of individualism. All these virtues are contained in, enhanced by one fundamental virtue—self respect. Self respect is implied in each of them. A man who does not respect himself can have no integrity, no courage, no strength, and no wisdom. Self respect implies that a man considers himself an entity of value. All these virtues are primary and they pertain to the rhyme of man’s mind and spirit. Ayn Rand defines these virtues as individualism.

Thus individualism can be defined as being independent, determined, uncompromising, possessing integrity, self-esteem and pursuit of that which makes them happy. The first trait of individualism is independence and the first condition required for man is independence, man’s independence from all other
men, the reasoning mind can accept no other outside authority. It cannot be curbed, sacrificed or subordinated to any consideration whatsoever not to any other man nor to any number of other men – the rational faculty demands total independence in function. The man who surrenders this independence destroys his means of survival; he surrenders the responsibility of thought and others must carry it and he will live as parasite on the products of their thinking. In *The Fountainhead*, protagonist Roark is fiercely independent. Ayn Rand says, *We the Living* is a novel on individual against the state and *The Fountainhead* is individual against other men. Howard Roark, *The Fountainhead* protagonist and hero is an architect. A man of unswerving integrity and exceptional ability, he is guided by no values but his own. *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* extol individualistic virtues but *The Fountainhead* does so in a more concise and unified manner. Rand identified the theme of *The Fountainhead*, as individualism versus collectivism and not in politics but in man’s soul.

Barbara Branden observes,

Ayn Rand was led to define two different ways of facing life. Two antagonists – two types of man. The man of self – sufficient ego, of first hand, independent judgment and the spiritual parasite, the dependent who rejects the responsibility of judging. The man whose convictions, values and purposes are the products of his
own mind and the parasite who is moulded and directed by other men. The man who lives for his own sake - and the collectivist of the spirit, who places others above self. The prime mover, whose source of movement is within his own spirit, and the soulless being whose movement is without an internal mover. The creator and the second hander. Howard Roark and Peter Keating (133)

Ayn Rand says about Roark,

How he feels is entirely a matter of own which cannot be influenced by anything or anyone on the outside. His feeling is a steady unruffled flame a profound joy of living and of knowing his power, a joy that is not even conscious of being joy, because it is so steady, natural and unchangeable. If outside life brings him disappointment, well it is merely a detail of the battle. He will have to struggle harder – that’s all. He is in conflict with the world in every possible way – and at complete peace with himself. (Barbara Branden 133)

Howard Roark destroys the Cortland home and when he defends himself for the act he says in The Fountainhead,

The basic need of the creator is independence. The reasoning mind cannot work under any form of compulsion. It cannot be curbed, sacrificed or subordinated to any consideration whatsoever.
It demands total independence in function and in motive. The degree of a man’s independence, initiative and personal love for his work determines his talent as a worker and his worth as a man. Independence is the only gauge of human virtue and value; there is no substitute for personal dignity. There is no standard of personal dignity except independence. (667)

Rand presented Roark as a fully integrated being of mind and body. Roark’s egoism is not boastful, conceited or ostentatious. Ayn Rand says that Roark is natural in his selfishness. He has the quiet, complete, irrevocable calm of iron conviction. No dramatics, no hysteria. Roark is the exact opposite of mass man for he was born without the ability to consider others. Roark’s egoism entailed cohesion of self. Roark is not a solipsist or a brute. His self is the focal point of responsibility, decision-making and value. It is Roark’s own happiness that is his primary consideration. He seeks to impose obligations on them. As a Randian hero, his intransigent mind does not understand or even conceive of the instinct for bowing and submission. His whole capacity for reverence is centered on himself.

Nathaniel Branden says

The first chapter of the novel establishes the basic character and context of Howard Roark, a young man passionately committed to
becoming an architect who has just been expelled from school for designing buildings that represent a total break with tradition, unmoved by expulsion; he knows he will not be stopped. His direction comes not from the opinions of values of others but from his own inner vision and convictions. In terms of its abstract theme, the novel is a dramatization of the morality of the individualism. I was aware that Ayn Rand had reached me in some unique way and that in the cardinal values of the novel-independence, integrity, love of one’s work and a sacred mission about one’s life – I had found a world more interesting, more energizing, more challenging and in a way more real than the world around me.

(James P. Draper 381)

Howard Roark knows exactly what he wants and is not least interested what other people think of him. In architectural terms, Roark’s work is original. He does not follow an already established school or style. His designs proceed organically from the site and each building has an intrinsic integrity. As Roark explains to Austen Heller “Your house is made by its own needs”. (James P. Draper 372) Architecture produced by second handers is derivative.

Roark receives an enormously important commission one that could make his carrier on one condition: that he must agree to modify the
unconventional design of his building. Roark explains why it is important for a building as it is important for a man to have integrity, why it cannot borrow pieces of its soul. They conceive that he may be right but in practical life one can’t always be so consistent. They give him an ultimatum: “‘yes’ or ‘no,’ Mr. Roark?” After a long agonizing moment Roark says “No”. Appalled, one member of the board of directors cries “You need the commission. Do you have to be so fanatical and selfless about it?” Pressing his architectural drawing to his body, Roark answers “That was the most selfish thing you have ever seen a man do.” (James P Draper 381) Maintaining the integrity of his own convictions, values and commitments above fame, worldly success or money was not an act of self sacrifice but a supreme expression of selfishness in the noblest possible meaning of that word. If he had perceived his action as self sacrificial; it would have lost all moral grandeur.

Peter Keating, a parasitic yet successful fellow architect asks Roark to design the government housing project Cortlandt homes and let Keating take the credit. Years earlier Keating graduated from architectural school with honours on the day Roark was expelled. Later, when they were both in practice, Roark struggling desperately, Keating rising to the top of his profession – Keating went to Roark again and again for help with his work. Keating is the second hander, the man without independent values or judgment, the man who lives through and by others. Roark, the innovator, the egoist, the man who lives
for his own sake and by his own mind has fought the battle of 18 years against the society around him. Now his architectural ideas are beginning to win. Keating approaches Roark for designing a project - Cortlandt Homes. Roark inspired by the challenge of Cortlandt Homes, agrees to design the project for Keating on one condition that it must be built exactly as Roark designs it. In a rare, pathetic groping for honesty, Keating struggles to understand Roark’s motive. Keating says to Roark “Everybody would say you are a fool........Everybody would say I am getting everything.........” Roark answers “you will get everything society can give a man. You will keep all the money. You will take any fame or honor anyone might want to grant. You will accept such gratitude as the tenants might feel. And I will take what nobody can give a man except himself. I will have built Cortlandt Homes.” (The Fountainhead 567)

When the first building of Cortlandt Homes was completed, Roark discovers that it has been totally disfigured. The Government bureaucrats have used Roark’s structural and engineering plans without which the project would have been impossible, but they have drastically altered the design, for petty and personal reasons. No legal recourse is available to Keating or Roark. The Government bureaucrats cannot be sued or forced to honor its contract. Roark dynamites Cortlandt Homes and waits at the scene of explosion to be arrested.
At this trail, Roark's statement to fury is a summation of the novel's philosophy that all progress and achievement comes from the independent mind; that altruism, the doctrine that self surrender is service to others is the highest ideal, is a device for controlling and ultimately enslaving productive men and women; that a human being is not a sacrificial animal, but has a right to exist for his or her own sake; that society depends on the work of the creators and has a right to that work only on the creator's terms. Roark is acquitted. At the trail Roark explains to the jury his action was necessary and inevitable. And it is at this point Roark makes the statement which Miss Rand tells us is the key to *The Fountainhead*. “I wished to come here and say I am a man who does not exist for others.” (370) He also says that it had to be said, the world is perishing from an ergy of self sacrificing. The true creator serves no one. He lives for himself. He simply responds to self generative primal forces. A man can either be a parasitical borrower or an independent creator. “All that which proceeds from man's independent ego is good. All that which proceeds from man's dependence upon men is evil. It is the creator, who denies, opposes, persecutes and exploits.” America, the noblest country in the history of men was erected on this principle, not in selfless service, sacrifice, renunciation or any percept of altruism. It was based on man's right to the pursuit of happiness... a private, personal, selfish motive.
Daniel Aarou says

Lest the point of the book be missed by her fans, Miss Rand explains in her letter that she is offering “a new code of ethics, a” morality of individualism”. What it amounts to is a kind of watered down existentialism; don’t live through other people. (James P. Draper 358)

In Contemporary Literary Criticism, Larine Pruett quotes Albert Gerard’s comment on The Fountainhead thus:

Howard Roark is the creator, a tough guy who works cheerfully in the quarries if he is not allowed to build in his own way” Miss Rand has taken her stand against collectivism; the rule of the second hander, ‘the ancient monster’ which has brought men to the level of intellectual indecency never equaled on earth. She has written a hymn in praise of the individual and has said things worth saying these days, whether her antithesis between altruism and selfishness is logically correct or not. She has written a powerful indictment. The fundamental problem of the individual is that he gets entangled with the totally different problem of the genius. The genius messiahs bring a new revelation, refuses to co-operate, he bids for absolute power, he must rule or be broken.
Howard Roark’s thought soars and swoops bewilderingly from Nietzsche through Spencer to Albert Jay Nock and Mr. Herbert to over. (James P. Draper 292)

Roark is certainly a man of integrity. Roark undertakes a construction for Sanborn. As the house took shape, Roark found that he wanted to make a change. The eastern wing had never quite satisfied him. Watching it rise, he saw the mistake he had made and the way to correct it: he knew the change would bring the house into a more logical whole. He admits it openly but Mr. Sanborn refuses for a change because it will cost him. Once the picture of that new had become clear in Roark’s mind he could not bear to look at the house as it stood. So Roark asked Sanborn “Will you sign a paper that you authorize this change, provided it cost you nothing”. (The Fountainhead 159) Mr. Sanborn signed. The eastern wing was rebuilt. Roark paid for it himself. It cost him more than the fee he received for the house. Roark’s integrity is of the highest order.

In a poignant criticism, Gerald Raftery comments on Rand –

In her major work, The Fountainhead Rand dramatizes the struggle of an individual to maintain his integrity and not to give into interests. Howard Roark is an architect whose profession perfectly blends individual artistic creation with social utilization.
All though he acknowledges the importance of the ultimate occupation of his buildings, his exclusive concern is with his individual creative act and its product. Ayn Rand provides Roark with a rationalization called integrity. Rand’s use of integrity is surely based on the definition, unimpaired or uncorrupted state, original perfect condition, Howard Roark; an architect genius persists in designing great buildings without sacrificing an inch of his integrity to the inevitably compromising demands of professional peers, opinion makers, the public taste and his clients. Ayn Rand’s endorsement of his values places him far from the middling crowd, separating him from spineless Keating and pitting him against the traitorous Toohey. The dialectic battle between a fantasy version of individualism – Roark and a satanic version of the co-operative spirit – Toohey culminates when Roark purposely dynamites a public work’s housing project he designed because its architectural integrity has been compromised. (James P. Draper)

A critic on Ayn Rand’s novels, Gladstein focuses to the moral absolutism-

*The Fountainhead* seems to say that it does not lack True believers but rather something or someone to believe in a Howard Roark, a
moral absolutist and fervent crusader admits the ugly spiritual malaise – perceived by some as ‘radical’ because its values – the emphasis on individualism, the romantic faith in efficacy of an idea over all practical obstacles, grim moral purity- belong to an earlier, pioneer stage of economic development in a capitalist culture. (James P. Draper 300)

Further he elaborates that it is ultimately an attack on present society from the regressive ‘Right wing’.

Howard Roark is expelled from Stanton Technological Institute because he could not go in with the accepted tradition. Roark says to the Dean “Why it is so important what others have done, why it becomes sacred by the mere fact of not being your own? Why are anyone and everyone right so long as it’s not you? Why does the number of those others take the place of truth? Why truth is made a more matter of arithmetic – and only of addition at that. Why is everything twisted out of all, sense to fit everything else?” he also adds that “I can find joy only if I do my work in the best way possible to me. But the best is a matter of standards and I set my own standards.” (The Fountainhead 16)

Roark walks out of the institute due to his independent nature. Later he pursues architecture under Cameron and after his death moves to Francon’s office, he quits the job under Francon, because he is independent. Francon
gives a photograph of a building and asks him to design something similar to it. Roark refuses to cheat and give the client the same old trash. Francon asks him to leave the office. Keating requests Roark to design Cortlandt Homes. Roark designs it on the condition that the building should not be altered at any cost, but the building is altered and Roark destroys the building. Roark faces trial for it. He says that progress and achievement come only from the independent mind. Man is not a sacrificial animal and has the right to exist for his sake.

The chairman and president of Manhattan bank requests Roark to build for them. But they give Mr. Parker’s son design for the building and they ask him to model his building on that design. Roark refuses. Weedier says “you won’t get another chance like this” but Roark declines. Roark prefers to work in a granite quarry as a worker rather than being dependent and parasitical and working on other’s designs.

Western city completed plans for a world’s fair to be held the next year, an international exposition to be known as “The mach of centuries” the committee of distinguished civic leaders in charge of the project chose a council of the country’s best artifacts to design the fair Roark agrees to design it independently alone, but declines to work with councils. Roark says “If you want me, you will have to let me do it all alone. I don’t work with collectives.”

(The Fountainhead 500)
Roark says that second hander's have no concern for facts, ideas or work. They don’t ask, is it true? They ask, “Is this what others think is true”? Not to judge but repeat. Not to do but give the impression of the doing. Those who are egoists don’t think through another’s brain and don’t work through another’s hands. When one suspends the faculty of independent judgment one suspends consciousness. To stop consciousness is to stop life.

An integrated individualist Roark is also determined and uncompromising. He walks out of the institute rather than compromising with his professors. Roark is determined to pursue his profession in accordance with his ideals. He never scarifies his ideals for any benefit whatsoever. Roark’s Dean tells him “you must aspire to give artistic expression to his clients’ wishes. Isn’t that all one can say on the subject” Roark says “well, I could say that I must aspire to build for my client the most comfortable, the most logical, the most beautiful house that can be built. I could say that I must try to sell him the best I have and also teach him to know the best. I could say it but I won’t because I don’t intend to build in order to serve or help anyone. I don’t intend to build in order to have clients. I intend to have clients in order to build”. (The Fountainhead 18)

He sticks to his principles with determination and builds only for clients who agree with him. Cameron says to Roark,“ It is no use wasting what you have got on an idea that you will never reach – it is no use taking marvelous
thing you have and making a torture rack for yourself out of it’ sell it Roark, sell it now. It won’t be the same, but you have got enough in you. You have got what they will pay for you, and pay plenty if you use it their way. Accept them Roark, compromise, compromise & now because you will have to later, anyway only then you will wish you hadn’t, save yourself from that”.

(The Fountainhead 54) But Roark disagrees to compromise.

If Roark had agreed to do designing, Francon would have admired him. If he had compromised to work on Mr. Parker’s building, he would have received a huge commission and fame for building Bank Company. In The Fountainhead Rand articulates a far more integrated and specifically Randian view of human existence that she had presented in any previous book. Yet in her portrayal of Howard Roark the influence of Nietzsche can still be detected.

Ayn Rand explains that despite her profound disagreement with Nietzsche’s metaphysics and epistemology, she remained impressed by his ability to project man’s greatness in beautifully poetic and emotional terms she quotes from ‘Beyond good and evil’ in which Nietzsche celebrates the fundamental certainty which a noble soul has about itself, something which is not to be sought is not to be found and perhaps also not to be lost. The noble soul has reverence for itself. Rand has this same imagination in mind when she describes Howard Roark as “The noble soul par excellence”.
Rand stated that Roark is a man as a man should be, the self-sufficient, self-confident, the end of ends, the reason into himself, and the joy of living personified. A man who is what he should be but she did present in fictional form, her own understanding of the nature of the genuine individualist as distinguished from mass men. For Rand, the individualist transcends dualism whereas mass man is split between the dictates of his own conscience and the demands of society. Ultimately the mass man or second hander abdicates his own soul. The individualist symbolized in the character of Roark was not a spiritual abstraction disconnected from material reality.

The novel ‘We the Living’ explicates convincingly detrimental effects of the Soviet government. Rand comments in the foreword, We the Living is as close to an autobiographical work as she would ever write but the extent of its resemblance to her life is that she and the heroine hold similar convictions. The plot of We the Living concerns a young woman struggles to fulfill her capabilities under the frustrating strictures of a communist regime. Not only is Kira not permitted to complete her Engineering Studies so that she can build bridges and skyscrapers, she has dreamed of constructing but she is not permitted to leave Russia for other countries where she might follow her dream.

Lest any reader misinterpret Rand’s message about the effects of the communist revolution through her spokesperson, Kira, Rand makes it clear that
the revolution did not fail because it was betrayed. Rand explicitly indicates the ideology that failed the revolution – the supremacy of collective over the individual through Kira and other characters, Rand illustrates why such an ideology is detrimental to human capacities for productivity and fulfillment. It glorifies mediocrity or worse stifling the good and the best.

The novel shows many of the abuses of the totalitarian state and the revolution gone sore as its system is worked to the benefit of speculators and plunderers. Rand describes a drab, dull, deadening society when party membership rather than ability is the prerequisite for position; progress is undermined and productivity slowed. When individual interests are sacrificed to that vague misnomer ‘The good of the group those who would create and contribute colour to a society cannot function. The novel We the Living is more about individual against the collective.’

The extreme form of individualism has been defined by Rand as the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity and reason as his only absolute. The novel We the Living is viewed as the polemic against totalitarianism and its disregard of the individual. Herald Strauss says (James D. Draper) that to the unwary ‘We the Living’ will possess the semblance of impartiality, for it is the story of a girl who was loved by two
men- by Leo an aristocrat and by Andrei a communist. But the dice are heavily loaded in the favour of Leo from the beginning, for Kira the girl is the daughter of the formerly wealthy factory owner; aside from Leo’s greater physical attractiveness, her background has imbued her whole being with a yearning for the gentility and individuality which he represents. Andrei on the other hand is a cog in the vast machinery of Soviet bureaucracy. Kira is deeply attracted by him personally, but their political differences are too great ever to allow them peace.

Kira has an intense passionate hunger for life. Beautifully sensitive to the real meaning and value of life and crushed under the senseless morbid suffocating conditions of a miserable existence, she is proud, confident, unbreakable and one of the very few and the only one who as a new person is not least effected by the new conditions, who denies them and does not quite understand their right or reason for existence. A sane, healthy individual thrown into the very depths of abnormal inhuman conditions. Independent and self assured, honest and straightforward, with a strong determination and disdainful pride.

Kira was rather cold and indifferent to everything that does not interest her deeply. Honest and straightforward, Kira refuses to accept communism.
Communism constituted and perpetuated a social dichotomy between individual and masses. Kira says

It is an old ugly fact that masses exist and make their existence felt. She feels that every individual must have his own ideas and convictions which should not be intruded by the state or by anybody and men must live for themselves and the best of the mankind do so. (We the Living, 89)

Kira also says “Don’t you know there is something in us who must not be touched by any state by any collective by any number of millions”. (89)

“We the Living was to be a protest” Ayn Rand said. She wanted to show that communism destroys not only the average man but most particularly the best among the men- the brightest and the most creative, those with the greatest gifts to offer the world. The novel set in the years immediately following the communist revolution is the story of Kira Argounove, a girl of fierce independence and in the mould of future. Kira is young 18, when the novel begins, gray eye with brown hair with a determination not to let the collectivist system wear her down. She wants to be an Engineer and build steel structures. She says “It is the only profession for which I don’t have to learn any lies. Steel is steel. Most of other sciences are someone’s guess, someone’s wish and many people’s lies.” (42)
Kira lives a life of an anticommunist throughout the novel because she upholds independence as the basic necessity for a man's survival. Ayn Rand's heroine is dedicated to two purposes, the work she has chosen to do and the man she loves. Kira plans to be an Engineer, a builder of bridges of mighty spans of steel and aluminum crossing blue rivers. But she is the daughter of Bourgeoisie 'a class enemy'. She is expelled from the university. She knows that she cannot leave this brave new world of Soviet communism not merely because the state forbids it because there is no power on earth that can tear her away from Leo Kovalensky but a power arises which threatens to rob her of her love, threatens to smash Leo's life and her own; he develops incipient tuberculosis. Leo's only salvation lies in the admission to a sanatorium in the south. The son of aristocrats cannot hope for the mercy of the state. Kira's desperate efforts to secure necessary permissions to cure Leo are in vain; the doors of sanatorium are locked airtight to Leo, as airtight as the suffering spirits of the regime's victims. Kira sends Leo to sanatorium by her own efforts.

Rand formed her ideals of human potential early in her life. Her first hero was the protagonist of a children's serial adventure. His name was Cyrus and the character Kira in her first novel 'We the Living' bears the feminine equivalent of his name. Cyrus inspired Rand because he was symbolic of man as he could be if he lived for the best that was in him, if he lived to his potential.
Rand wrote "'We the Living' as near an autobiography as I ever write". (James P. Draper 377) Not literally, she hastened to add but intellectually. Kira is the student of Engineering while Rand studied History. Kira wants to build, Rand wanted to write. Kira dies trying to escape Russia, while Rand escaped and lived a full life. But Rand like Kira knew from childhood that she hated the communist system from the moment it told her that man exists for the state. Rand always said that this is not really a story about Russia or even about Soviet system as such. To her it was a story about man against the state, its theme universal, its philosophy timeless. Kira is one of the very few and the only one who as a person is not least effected by the new conditions, who denies them and does not quite understand their right or reason for existence. Educated in a wealthy family by a mother who let her grow up as she pleased, without any restraints or influences, and with plenty of everything she needed. As a result, she has a calm poise and the full free strength of her own unusual personality that has not accumulated useless alien inhibitions from any outside source. No religion whatsoever. Kira possesses a brilliant mind with lots of courage and daring. Only her calm exterior poise hides her tempestuous emotional nature. Kira has a sort of graceful restraint under which one can feel the storming fire. Absolutely proof against all influences. She is always alone and to most people aloof. Honest and straight forward, the honesty of pride and of superiority. She is an individualist in the true sense of the word.
Kira is an individualist right from her childhood. She throws out of the window, the first book she read about a good fairy rewarding an unselfish little girl. Her resentment to communism is evident when she says to Victor her cousin “It is an old ugly fact that masses exist and make their existence felt. This is a time when they make it felt with a particular ugliness”. (We the Living, 58)

Kira’s friendship with Andrei is another trait of individualism. She considers him as a right individual though he is a communist. She says to him “I loathe your ideals” but she cherishes him as a good friend. She remains an anticomunist throughout her life. She adheres to the principles of individualism and dies in her attempt to escape from Russia.

In ‘We the Living’, Andrei Taganov is a born individualist and leader who never discovered it. A great mind and a profound honesty. An iron will and unconquerable strength. A great calm and deliberation – the calm of a man who knows he is master of himself and has learned long ago to have complete self control. Occasional, very rare flashes of temper that show the real fire in him – a fire, however, that never gets the best of the man.

His father, a factory worker, mixed in politics and sent to Siberia during the revolution of 1905; died in exile. His mother, died shortly afterwards of poverty and overwork. He, the only son, made his way through the hardest work (with an) iron determination, and a long toil that did not break him, but
only taught him patience and hardened him. No school education; self education and self made. Andrei is always lonely and aloof, aloof without realizing it. He is never a good mixer nor a popular fellow. In his political career, he advanced through his brilliant ability and unquestionable honesty more than through popularity in the party, where he is far from being popular. His comrades in the party are always his political friends, never his personal chums; this is not the result of any deliberate attitude taken by him, but the natural behaviour of a man who has devoted his entire life to his political ideals and sees only that.

As to those ideals: they are the result of his early hatred of the existing system of society – not so much hatred, but rather a calm and cool determination of long ago: to do away, someday, someone, with the inhuman conditions that he went through and in which he started his life. The people whose champion he is stand before his eyes as individuals, as men like himself, whose life is crushed by the senseless power of a society that has no right to a man’s life. In that, and more unconsciously than hers, his tragedy is the same as Kira’s. Both are superior individuals. Both have in their souls the sensitivity, the understanding, the hunger for real life, as few men see it. Both rise to fight for their rights to that life; and both face the enemy: society, the state, the mass. She is stronger; she realizes the fight and the enemy. He is more tragic, because his fight is unconscious: the fight against society of a man who stands as a champion of the most sociable ideas.
He is a man who would have been a Napoleon- had he been born with less conscience and idealism. He has an iron devotion to his ideas, the devotion of a medieval martyr. Andrei is capable of anything, any cruelty, if convinced that his aim needs it. Cruelty for the cause is, to him, a victory over himself; it gives him the feeling of doing his duty against his sentiment.

Yet a profound egoism lies under that devotion to his work, for it is his work and his aim that he is serving. His ideas have not been inspired by sympathy and compassion for the suffering of the masses. It is his suffering and his pride that made him take arms against society. This is subconscious, for it’s not his personal interests that he has in mind, it’s the victory of his idea-and his idea is the upraising of fighters, individuals, strong men of the people crushed under a senseless, ignoble system.

The taste, manners, and the tact of an aristocrat-but not conventional manners, just the poise and dignity of a man with inborn good judgment. Instinctive, unconscious understanding of beauty and art; an untrained, but wise esthetic feeling, [which is] dormant, never given much attention or opportunity. Delicate and sensitive to other people’s feelings - no violent hatred or prejudices against anyone. No religion.

No conceit. One of the few people who is absolutely untouched by flattery, administration, or any form of other people’s opinion. Not because of a
proud disdain, but because of a natural indifference to it. Subconsciously, he
knows his superiority and does not need any one’s endorsement. Consciously,
he is interested only in doing what he thinks is right; [he wants to be] satisfied
in his own eyes. A self-discipline learned long ago.

A man who knows how to take serious things seriously. But with hidden
beauty, sympathy, even tenderness, and an intelligent sense of humour.
Accustomed to hard work and making the most of his time, all concentrated in
one line and aim. Never had an affair. Not because of a moral effort,
asceticism, or self-imposed renunciation, but because of lack of interest. Yet a
very strong sense of sensuality, unawakened.

Kira is the first woman who ever attracted his attention. His instinctive
sense of values and beauty sees in her what very few men see. Therefore, his
passion-unexpected, fierce, primitive, letting loose energy long restrained-
overwhelms him with its intensity. He has sense enough not to attempt any
struggle, nor to consider it as interfering with his aim and duty. He just
surrenders completely to what is for him a newly discovered beauty in life, the
life for which he has a profound instinct. It is characteristic that Kira is an
aristocrat, a woman of upper classes, and that, knowing her hatred of his party,
he never resents it. Though a communist he remains as an individualist
throughout the novel.
At a party gathering Andrei delivers a speech that will end his career. “Every man worth calling a man lives for himself” he says. “The one who doesn’t- doesn’t live at all. You cannot change it because that is the way man is born, alone, complete an end in him. No laws, no party, no G.P.U. will ever kill that thing in man which knows how to say I”. (James P. Draper 379)

This of course sounds more like Howard Roak than the Andrei earlier in the novel; but it is supposed to show the change that Kira and his recent experience have had on him. He blackmails a party official to secure Leo’s release, assures Leo that he and Kira are only friends and takes his own life, while misguided before he met Kira, Andrei was all his life a noble person, dedicated to noble causes far superior to men who sought power of creative comforts. His spirit emerges victorious even in death. In later novels he is represented by John Galt and Howard Roark.

Ronald E Merril says

With the publication of Atlas Shrugged Rand reached the destination of an intellectual journey - the Taggart terminal. She had purged the last vestiges of Nietzche’s errors from her thinking and completely integrated her ideas into her philosophical system. The great question of her life, the dilemma of the rational person in an irrational society, at last was solved to
her satisfaction. The concept of the sanction of the victim provided her answer and provided also the key plot device, the strike of the men of the mind, for her greatest novel. (James P. Draper 389)

In ‘Atlas Shrugged’ Rand takes as her theme the destruction of civilization when it’s just men are withdrawn. Rand succeeded in portraying her ideal man John Galt in this novel. Into the grey suited bodies of her business executive heroes, Rand poured the souls of her childhood idols from the melodramas she devoured as a girl which resulted in the creation of those extraordinary characters who have inspired so many of her young readers especially the central leaders of ‘Atlas Shrugged’, Hank Rearden and John Galt who are great individualists.

Rearden is introduced as a man interested in steel. Having dealt with the clean reality of metals, technology production all his life, he had acquired the conviction that one had to concern oneself with the rational, not the insane that one had to seek that which was right because the right answer always won. The senseless, the wrong, the monstrously unjust could not work, could not succeed, could do nothing but defeat itself.

Rearden has devised a new type of truss which had never been made before and could not be made except with members that had the strength and
the light of Rearden metal. He says he wanted to build a bridge of Rearden metal to show the country its greatness. The state science institute deliberately issues a public opinion that Rearden metal is not good and a man from the state science institute comes to Rearden providing him a blank cheque and asking him to sell the rights of Rearden metal. The man asks Rearden, “Why you want to struggle for years, squeezing out your gains in the form of pennies per ton rather than accept a fortune for Rearden metal.” Rearden answers “because it is mine. Do you understand this word?” (Atlas Shrugged 172) Rearden’s integrity and individualism is evident from this incident.

Rearden is accused and he is on trial for the greedy crime of withholding from the public a load of metal. Rearden defends himself by saying that he does not recognize the court’s right to control the sale of his metal.

Rearden says

All I want is freedom to make money. I work for nothing but my own profit. I earn it. I do not sacrifice my interest to them nor do they sacrifice theirs to me; we deal as equals by mutual consent to mutual advantage and I am proud of every penny I have earned in this manner. (Atlas Shrugged 446)

Rearden’s love for freedom, an individualistic trait is illustrated. Rearden says if he was asked to emulate himself for the sake of creatures who wanted to
survive at the price of his blood and if he was asked to serve the interests of the society against his own, he would refuse and he would fight it with every power he possess.

Fransico says to Rearden “Millions of men, an entire nation were not able to deter you from producing Rearden metal because you had the knowledge of its superlative value and the power which such knowledge gives”. (Atlas Shrugged 420)

Rearden says “the public may curtail my profits anytime it wishes by refusing to buy my product” (444). Rearden’s determination, knowledge and self confidence, the basic individualistic traits are witnessed.

John Gatt’s speech in Atlas Shrugged forms the essence of individualism. Man exists for his own happiness; he is an end in himself and does not exist for the sake of others. If any man is asked to sacrifice himself for others, it means that he has something of value, some virtue, which they lack. Therefore, it means that the worthless is given a claim of priority over the valuable, the unvirtuous over the virtuous, miserable over the happy. It means whatever the standard of values, since it is only a value that can be sacrificed that the good must be sacrificed to the evil.

Man is being of free will, he has to survive by conscious choice and effort, he has to choose his purpose and the means to achieve it. The choice of the means depends on the purpose, and the choice of the purpose depends on
his code of values. A being of free will cannot choose, act, or exists without a standard of values. His standard must be himself. His basic, primary, essential must be to live. He can live only in the manner proper to his nature. He must understand his nature, define it.

Man’s essence and sole means of survival is his mind and capacity to think. Any departure from it or denial of it is a destruction of his consciousness. The morality or standard of values not based on his reason is impossible for him to practice and can lead only to his destruction. He cannot live against and in contradiction to his consciousness.

Man of spirit is the man of the mind. He is the man who is not the slave, but the ruler of matter. He is the man who makes it possible for mankind to survive. He is the creative man.

The morality of the mind-to is true to truth. The great courage, integrity and responsibility are that it requires. The only cardinal sin is denial or suspension of one’s reason – refusal to face reality, identify it and make rational connections. The greatest field where the morality is needed and expressed is the field of material production.

All material production is an achievement of the spirit of the mind. Every human creation has to start in the mind and be given form in matter. Every spiritual value of man has to be expressed in material form or action.
The men of production must set themselves free of the guilt which has been attached to them for centuries. Do not accept the destroyer’s morality. Do not submit to force. Do not give them that which they cannot force of out you, which they cannot obtain without consent: your living power- the power of your love for life – your mind. Put an end to the use of your virtues for your own torture - and of your life as a tool of destruction and death.

Thus individualism is expounded in the novels of Ayn Rand.