

The BEACON SpotLight

A Study of Constitutional Issues by Topic

Issue 10: Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and Tyranny

While a book review would normally be outside the purview of this newsletter, the continuing popularity of Ayn Rand's classic 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged* would perhaps provide an exception, as it has inspired countless numbers of idealistic libertarians and conservative Americans (including originally this author).

Rand is also the founder of the moral philosophy she labelled 'Objectivism'.

Objectivism, by its name, would seem to allow if not demand objective analysis of all matters, including *Atlas Shrugged* itself. Consistent with that mandate, then, it is appropriate to proceed.

Rand was a fervent atheist, deriding all those who believe in God as *mystics of spirit*.

She writes in her novel, while pulling no punches;

> "A mystic is a man who surrendered his mind at its first encounter with the minds of others…At the crossroads of the choice between 'I know' and 'They say,' he chose the authority of others, he chose to submit rather than to understand, to believe rather than think. Faith in the supernatural begins as faith in the superiority of others. His surrender took the form of feeling that he must hide his lack of understanding, that others possess some mysterious knowledge of which he alone is deprived, that reality is whatever they want it to be, through some means forever denied to him." [1]

But what of Rand's characters; when confronted by despicable men who use government powers which defy apparent limitation, what do Rand's characters do?

Do her characters diligently seek to understand how the government founded to secure the unalienable rights of man — life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness — was somehow transformed into the supreme government engine to deny those rights, instead empowering those who gain control of the reins of absolute power?

Do Rand's characters ever seek to make sense of the nonsense which allows government to ignore its own constitutional limitations, so those who exercise awe-inspiring power can be stopped, as soon as possible?

No, character after character in the novel submit to this immoral authority without question, surrendering themselves to the idea that they cannot even understand it, let alone challenge it. Their only hope is to step aside, to concede unlimited power to the 'looters' and watch them destroy the country through their incompetence, so the primary characters can thereafter return.

Rand's characters, for their 'lack of understanding', 'submit rather than understand', 'believe rather than think'; never once do they question corrupt government.

For instance, railroad heiress Dagny Taggart offers;

> "It seems monstrously wrong to surrender the world to the looters, and monstrously wrong to live under their rule. I can neither give up nor go back. I can neither exist without work nor work as a serf. I had always thought that any sort of battle was proper, anything, except renunciation. I'm not sure we're right to quit, you and I, when we should have fought them. *But there is no way to fight.*" [2]

1. Rand, Ayn. *Atlas Shrugged*. Random House, 1957. Pp. 1044-1045.

2. *Ibid.*, Page 618. Italics added.

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It would be difficult to understand those words as anything other than unconditional surrender and utter submission, conceding defeat to the 'authority of others', even when that authority far exceeds our written Constitution.

And Taggart is far from alone. Philosophy professor Hugh Akston informed Taggart why he joined inventor John Galt in his quest to remove the men of the mind from a society which sought to absolutely control them;

> "I quit and joined him and went on strike…because I could not share my profession with men who claim that the qualification of an intellectual consists of denying the existence of the intellect."[3]

Judge Narragansett offers;

> "I quit when the court of appeals reversed my ruling…I quit—because I could not have borne to hear the words 'Your Honor' addressed to me by an honest man."[4]

Dr. Hendricks offers;

> "I quit when medicine was placed under State control, some years ago."[5]

Oil magnate Ellis Wyatt said he quit;

> "because I didn't wish to serve as the cannibals' meal and to do the cooking, besides."[6]

Stage Actress Kay Ludlow offered;

> "Whatever quality of human greatness I have the talent to portray—that was the quality the outer world sought to degrade…They used my talent—for the defamation of itself. That is why I quit."[7]

Tycoon Francisco d'Anconia, in response to "government regulations" passed to cripple his copper business, which "tightened the noose around (his) throat" the "harder (he) worked", stated that he "*saw no way to fight it*", although he offered that John Galt "found the way."[8]

Galt's way, in his own words, was simply to go "on strike."[9]

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3. *Ibid.*, Page 741.
4. *Ibid.*, Page 742.
5. *Ibid.*, Page 744.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, Page 784.
8. *Ibid.*, Page 766. Italics added..
9. *Ibid.*, Page 738.

Galt elaborated later, stating that;

> "I quit that factory. I quit your world. I made it my job to warn your victims and give them the method and the weapons to fight you..."[10]

Galt had much more to say about his strike against the corrupted world, but never once in the 1168-page novel does he ever seek to discover the methods actually used by government officials to exercise essentially unlimited government power at their whim. He never seeks to learn the hidden secret of their spectacular success.

And Galt offers the following advice;

> "Do not attempt to rise on the looters' terms or to climb the ladder while they're holding the ropes. Do not allow their hands to touch the only power that keeps them in power: your living ambition. Go on strike—in the manner I did. Use your mind and skill in private, extend your knowledge, develop your ability, but do not share your achievements with others…"[11]

Galt offered insight into the time when he and his followers would return to work, saying;

> "When the looters' state collapses, deprived of the best of its slaves, when it falls to a level of impotent chaos, like the mystic-ridden nations of the Orient, and dissolves into starving robber gangs fighting to rob one another—when the advocates of the morality of sacrifice perish with their final ideal—then and on that day we will return…"[12]

Galt continued;

> "The victims are on strike. We are on strike against martyrdom—and against the moral code which demands it. We are on strike against those who believe that one man must exist for the sake of another. We are on strike against the morality of cannibals, be it practiced in body or in spirit.
>
> "We have ceased breaking that moral code. We shall blast it out of existence forever by the one method that it can't withstand: by obeying it. We are obeying it. We are complying…We have withdrawn the works of our minds from society."[13]

Wow, talk about darkness and discouragement, complying with and obeying every effort to enslave mankind. Not exactly the route America's true founders sought, thank you, God.

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10. *Ibid.*, Page 1048.
11. *Ibid.*, Pp. 1066-1067.
12. *Ibid.*, Page 1067.
13. *Ibid.*, Page 740.

Really, the best hope for mankind is step aside and obey the looters' every command, to watch them take over until they destroy society because they ran out of victims to plunder? Hardly inspirational.

But what is to be expected of atheists who understand nothing of faith and hope, of pursuing a course of action larger than themselves?

So Rand's characters, when confronted with invalid government action, action which by any objective measure using our federal Constitution as the gauge, submit to that power without question, surrendering the whole country to the looters to use at their absolute discretion, allowing them free reign without resistance until the utter end.

Having no belief in God, Rand and her characters had only reason. When that reason was insufficient to understand the problem actually facing them, they were left with nothing but death and destruction.

Thus it is perhaps without surprise when scores of people who ride a fume-puffing coal-powered train near the end of the book die of asphyxiation in the eight-mile long Taggart Tunnel or when the Project X Xylophone sound-ray weapon vaporizes everything within a 100-mile radius at the hands of a mindless brute who cannot even understand the operator controls but who wants to rule over the secret facility anyway.

And Rand had more to offer on the coming day when the men of the mind could return.

Though Francisco d'Anconia offered that he "saw no way to fight" absolute government control, he offered that "John found the way". And that way was;

> "to extinguish the lights of the world, and when we would see the lights of New York go out, we would know that our job was done."[14]

Wow, what inspiration; what hope — to have the same end-goal as the real-life terrorists who attacked that city on September 11, 2001.

While Rand's characters had far different motives than that of those who unleashed America's most-destructive terrorist attack, nevertheless to accept the same end-game scenario as used by the most rabid of our country's adversaries hardly seems wise.

Rand's book offers further evidence of hypocrisy, beyond her harsh attack on religious followers of Christ.

For instance, Hugh Akston, states;

> "We never make assertions, Miss Taggart…That is the moral crime peculiar to our enemies. We do not tell—we show. We do not claim—we prove."[15]

Really, they never make assertions; they do not claim, they prove?

Well then, what about when Francisco d'Anconia tells industrialist Hank Reardon;

> "Those pieces of papers, which should have been gold, are a token of honor—your claim upon the energy of men who produce"?[16]

"Should have been gold" is an assertion, one which was not proven therein. Never once in the lengthy novel was any effort ever exerted to understand how the 1933 confiscation of gold in the United States was really only a margin call on over-extended bankers who had a legal duty to back their banknotes with gold, with everyone else actually free to retain their gold.

On the same subject, d'Anconia offers;

> "Whenever destroyers appear among men, they start by destroying money, for money is men's protection and the base of a moral existence. Destroyers seize gold and leave to its owners a counterfeit pile of paper. This kills all objective standards and delivers men into the arbitrary power of an arbitrary setter of values. Gold was an objective value, an equivalent of wealth produced. Paper is a mortgage on wealth that does not exist, backed by a gun aimed at those who are expected to produce it."[17]

Although Rand is certainly correct with her view as to gold's proper status as the legal standard for objective value, never does she or her characters seek to discover how gold was cleverly seized and replaced with paper money, all legal sleight of hand without true authority.

For instance, Dagny Taggart says to John Galt;

> "'What's Mulligan doing with a mint'?"[18]

Rand narrates next that;

> "Galt reached into his pocket and dropped two small coins into the palm of her hand. They were miniature disks of shining gold, smaller than pennies, the kind that had not been in circulation since the days of Nat Taggart."[19]

14. *Ibid.*, Page 766.

15. *Ibid.*, Page 735.
16. *Ibid.*, Page 410.
17. *Ibid.*, Page 413.
18. *Ibid.*, Page 727.
19. *Ibid.*

What then of that lack of gold circulation? What did Galt and his followers do in response? 'Blank out', as Rand would ascribe of her religious adversaries.

As Rand would write against the believers of God, when their own understanding of reality "clashed with the assertions of others, with their arbitrary orders and contradictory commands," they would give in "to so craven a fear of independence that he renounced his rational faculty."[20]

Rand's characters suffered this same 'blank-out' mentality when confronted with invalid government action, although never does she admit this.

For example, one finds within *Atlas Shrugged* conversations such as that between Taggart and Galt, where she asks him "Well, where can I buy the gold?" Galt offers, in complete submission to corrupted government;

> "You can't…Not where you come from. Your laws forbid it."[21]

Oh really, in what way, exactly?

Yes, for a forty-year period between 1933 and 1975, it certainly *appeared* that way to the un-informed, but why not work diligently to discover how the government instituted to protect persons and their property could ever be transformed into its opposite, as does the author writing this newsletter, in his own works?

Rand was right to hold gold up as our nation's Standard of Value, but never once do her characters look to discover exactly how counterfeit piles of paper ever gained an improper foothold as legal tender in the country founded also upon property and the sanctity of contract.

Rand ruthlessly disparaged the religious, but her characters commit the same errors she accuses of her opponents.

Though Rand went to great length to show why the looters' *shouldn't* be allowed to exist, never once do they ever question *how* exactly those looters ever gained such awe-inspiring power in the first place.

'Why' without 'how' makes the first an exercise in futility.

There is little sense going to all the trouble of explaining the 'why' if one won't make a concerted effort to understand the 'how'.

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20. *Ibid.*, Pp. 1044-1045.
21. *Ibid.*, Page 718.

Rand offers that mystics' belief in God makes God's followers mindless automatons who submit without question to the authority of men who claim authority from God.

But then Rand's characters submit without question to the authority of men who claim authority only through government, even the government meant to be extremely limited in its extent.

Of the two, which would be the greater folly?

And human history is actually replete with countless numbers of Christians standing up against the most impossible of odds against every sort of tyrant who sought to deny them their right to worship God, choosing even martyrdom over denying their faith, who do not waver from their principles even in the face of certain death.

So what do Rand's characters do when confronted with harsh and unjust laws? They obey them. They comply, while patiently waiting for the destruction of modern society.

Of the two parties, again which is more principled? Which parties actually stand more firmly upon their convictions? Those with an unfailing belief in God, of course, especially those in real life who suffer terrible retribution for their beliefs.

In *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand's characters acted with knowledge, reason and volitional action. But when those limits were reached, there was nothing left to inspire them to do anything other than quit.

Thus, when confronted with a seemingly-impregnable power of government to do anything to anyone at any time, they quit, en masse.

Rand's characters did not challenge; they did not question; they did not double-down and try harder; they quit; they surrendered; they submitted.

When the going got tough, the 'tough' escaped into a remote, hidden valley.

In this author's own fictional trilogy (*Bald Justice*, *Base Tyranny*, and *Bare Liberty*), his characters of faith in God had hope.

Thus, after reaching their own limits of reason and knowledge in seeking diligently to discover how government ever became sufficiently empowered to ignore its own charter, the characters' faith provided them the hope and sufficient perseverance to continue searching for answers, until reason and knowledge could again one day catch up and make sense of it all.

Thus Mark Evanston of the *Bald Justice* trilogy kept at his research and diligent study until he learned how paper currencies were ever cleverly made a legal tender in 1862; how gold was deceptively recalled in 1933; and how omnipotent government in every other matter also ever gained a toe-hold in the Land of the Free and Home of the Brave.

Mark Evanston continued with his quest until he figured out exactly how clever government magicians turned limited government on its head, exposing the seemingly magical power of government as but a clever sleight of hand.

Evanston pulled back the curtain on the wizard of supposedly unlimited powers, exposing him as but a mere man adept only at casting confusion; a fraud hiding behind a curtain, pulling the levers of government to only provide the appearance of unimaginable power which was in fact nothing more than a clever mirage.

America's true story as a country of unimaginable hope losing its way to generations of con men seeking to line their own pockets with inconceivable wealth is a story which must be told. But *Atlas Shrugged* does not tell it.

And neither does that novel aid the people caught up in a real-life struggle because not even in the end does Rand get the solution right, which is hardly surprising since she wholly fails to accurately diagnose the true problem.

For example, in her closing, Rand offers that Judge Narragansett;

> "sat at a table, and the light of his lamp fell on the copy of an ancient document. He had marked and crossed out the contradictions in its statements that had once been the cause of its destruction. He was now adding a new clause to its pages: 'Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of production and trade'."[22]

While ignoring that the Constitution cannot be changed by any one man, Rand offers that her remedy is to prohibit Congress from making any law "abridging the freedom of production and trade."

The errors Rand here makes are substantial. Again, not questioning 'how' omnipotent power ever gained foothold, she accepts that current bloated authority at face value. Members of Congress have not even the enumerated power to regulate 'production', after all, only 'commerce' or trade.

By seeking to emplace specific restrictions upon Congress which were never granted in the first place, Rand comes from the false position that members of Congress have the power to act except as explicitly prohibited, i.e., that they have *inherent* powers, except as expressly denied (exactly opposite the true nature of our federal government). In other words, she believes the mirage at face value and questions it not.

For instance, the power to regulate commerce is the power to make trade regular, consistent, uniform. It grants no power for the federal government to even regulate businesses engaged in trade, let alone in production. Production is the making of a thing, which is not commerce. Commerce is simply the moving of an existing thing from place to place and its related functions.

Rand takes the current status quo as within the rightful authority of Congress and then seeks to make permanent changes in the Constitution based upon her false beliefs. Failure to accurately diagnose the true problem assures failure of her proposed cure.

It was Alexander Hamilton writing in *The Federalist* #84 who spoke of the dangers inherent in ratifying a Bill of Rights into existence in the first place, for it would provide designing men with sufficient pretense to claim that the government had inherent powers, able to exercise powers which were never granted.

Of course, in 1791, the States did ratify our Bill of Rights, which were ratified;

> "to prevent misconstruction or abuse of (federal) powers."[23]

Our country's founders so distrusted government power that they took the unusual step to deny specific powers never even granted to a government of delegated powers.

Unfortunately, the same Bill of Rights which helps keep our current government somewhat in check actually makes it that much more difficult for Americans to see beyond that appearance of inherent powers to understand how to regain government truly limited to its enumerated powers, together only with the means both necessary and proper for carrying them out.

The answer to restoring limited government is not to create an exhaustive list of actions which the federal government is henceforth prohibited from performing, but to understand how exactly the limited grant of enumerated powers ever seemed to grow into a government without apparent limitation in the first place.

22. *Ibid.*, Pp. 1167-1168.

23. *See* the Preamble to the Bill of Rights.

Rand's recommendation further shows the errors of trying to restrain government through added checks, as she seeks to deny Congress even the necessary power to regulate commerce.

If members of Congress are prohibited this power, what of treason, defined and prohibited in the Constitution, as adhering to one's enemies, giving them aid and comfort?

Rand offers no exception to her mandate.

So, even during a period of declared war, profit-seeking American businesses could not be legally prohibited from their now-unfettered right to sell the arms and munitions they manufactured even to our declared enemies, to purposely provide for profit the guns and bullets to kill Americans in the armed services and perhaps even a great number of our own civilians.

It is proper for Congress to have the power to regulate and even curtail foreign trade, to put principles above profits, to put American lives above American earnings. And that is why the Constitution empowers Congress with that authority.

Just as one's rights do not go so far as to infringe upon the rights of others, so too the rights of free trade do not extend to allowing others to help infringe upon the rights of all for profit.

Now, of course, members of Congress currently go far beyond their delegated authority detailed throughout the whole of the Constitution.

But to learn the method used by members of Congress and government officials to expand government authority on their own accord must not be confused with the proper mechanism used to expand government authority lawfully.

And that difference is for us citizens to discover.

The widespread constitutional ignorance of today is not necessarily the fault of the founders, even though they did not fully anticipate the cleverness of arrogant men in exploiting a little-understood power of the Constitution, to transform it into the fount of government omnipotence.

There is one clause within our Constitution which allowed immoral, power-seeking sycophants, following Alexander Hamilton's deviant lead, to turn America into the country we see today, teetering on the brink of vast corruption and utter collapse.

But unlike Rand's characters, we need not let that corruption continue. It is within our power to stop it, by exposing its nasty little secret for the whole world to see.

Truth is the enemy of the oppressive American state.

We need not seek electoral majorities operating within democratic circles. We won the war against tyranny hundreds of years ago.

Our Constitution was ratified as the answer for keeping tyranny from American shores; it is already the Supreme Law of the Land.

All who exercise governing powers must swear an oath or give an affirmation to support that Constitution, or they are under the authority of a superior who already has.

We must learn the true principles of our Republican Form of Government guaranteed to every State of the Union in Article IV, Section 4 of our federal Constitution.

We do not need electoral or legislative majorities to uphold this Constitution; we only need to understand how power-seeking tyrants succeed in ignoring it.

The mechanism used to gain unbelievable power is not detailed in Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, but it is detailed in the novels *Bald Justice*, *Base Tyranny*, and *Bare Liberty* by Matt Erickson.

These novels and also his non-fiction books *Patriot Quest*, *Dollars and nonCents*, and *Monetary Laws*, fully explore and detail the exact mechanism of how government was ever able to ascend to great power and how to properly restrict or eliminate that abuse of power forevermore.

All these books are released into the public domain and may be freely downloaded at www.PatriotCorps.org; www.Archive.org; and www.Scribd.com/matt_erickson_6.

And that mechanism which allowed for the complete transformation of our federal government into a government of unlimited tyranny is outlined in four brief pages of the ninth issue of the newsletter *The Beacon Spotlight* entitled, "The Exceptional Tenth Amendment and Its Unknown Exception."

Read Issue 9 of *The Beacon Spotlight* to begin your own quest to Restore Our American Republic, once and for all.

God Bless these United States of America, Land of the Free, Because of the Brave.

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