

## Rand's Egoism and Marx's Collectivism: An Ethical Perspective

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### Introduction

It has been argued that Ayn Rand's ethics, in particular morality, on which she defends the individual's selfishness and capitalism, makes her doctrine superior to Marx's theory of collectivist socialism[1].

Marx and Rand, despite differences, share common foundations in many respects. Both Marx's collectivism and Rand's individualism seek the natural bases of morals and of law, and their philosophies are based on natural reason as an ethical and social ideal, designating all the hopes and aspirations of modern man[2].

In opposition to the Christian ideal, they both subscribe to the fundamental (natural) rights of man[3]. Marx to equality and fraternity – these humanitarian demands forming the basis of his collectivism; Rand to full freedom which forms the conceptual basis of her egoism. Thus, while Rand's concept of egoism is the antithesis of Marx's concept of socialism (signifying the uniting and intimate association of men), it also expresses the aspirations of humanity.

Common to both Marx and Rand is that they regard ethical life as something added to the natural essence of man. Equally common to both is materialism. Rand's extreme egoism, holding that not ideas, but man's body is his essential nature, gives rise to materialism. In following Feuerbach (man is what he eats), Marx concluded that if the activity of the mind was a product of the body and the body is maintained by nourishment, then the mind is nothing but a product of this nourishment; and since nourishment is secured by work, the mind is finally the result of work and of production generally. Man, then, is what he makes. Marx and Engels found the meaning of history in processes of an economic nature. The determining forces in all social conditions are economic relations. They form the ultimate motives for all activities. Their change and their development are the only conditioning forces for public life and politics, and likewise for science and religion. All the different activities of civilization are then only offshoots of economic life.

Doctrines rooted in extreme ethical dualism (*à la* Marx and Rand) have failed to provide a viable model of social organization. Both Rand's and Marx's approaches are marked by a distorted picture of reality where, on the one hand, living as a true individual would exclude altruism and, on the other hand, living as communal man would exclude rights to one's individuality. Man's nature is probably a measure of both egoism and collectivism, a kind of an unsociable-sociability (Kant). If this is so, then there does not have to be absolute opposition between the individual and the collective.

To shed some light on the problems involved and to appraise egoism and collectivism from an ethical perspective requires an enquiry into the epistemological foundations of ethics, and content of morality, the validity of moral laws and the motives for moral action. Analysis and explanation of the principles of morality show that the various approaches to these principles are capable of being combined with one another in the most various ways. I do not intend to subject the motley variety and changing hues exhibited by Marx-Engels' and Rand's moral philosophies either to a clearing and separating process to unveil their doctrinaire roots or to categorizing them.

### Origins of Morality

Marx's socialism is purposefully anti-individualistic. For Marx, the individual considered as an isolated unit, the ego, has no importance in itself because its essence can be understood only in the light of its relation to the totality of class. The opinion and the conscience of individuals have no significance for collectivists. What is important is the opinion and the conscience of the masses. A proletarian or a bourgeois is but a part of the property-less class or the property-owning class. The proletariat or capitalists are the real individuals and not the individual man, not the proletariat or capitalists of one nation, but of all humanity.

On the other hand, Rand, following in the footsteps of the philosophical representatives of individualism, conceives of man as he exists (*Dasein* not *Sein*), as a volitionally rational animal. For Rand, it is not man in general who is man. It is a completely specific man, the rational individual, who chose to become man, who is the measure of all things[4]. The absolutely definite individual, he, because he thinks and engages in productive work, is man. It is the quality of being conscious, of what he does, thinks, which is truly human. In his natural determinate character he is the original datum, which is self-intelligible, and all relations which go beyond the individual are to be explained from him as a starting-point[5].

Rand's perfectly specific individual displaces all authority of persons and ideas. If he is the measure of all things, he is the truth. If he is the truth, then all which seems right to him is right. Society is a phantom, it itself is an abstraction – it is "only a number of individual men" (Rand, 1964, pp. 14-15). Any social or species conception of technology must also be an abstraction. With no ends being more important than other ends, a teaching of *sui generis* individualism and relativism is born.

What, however, is this ego, this I (*allgemeinen Ich*)? Following Locke, Rand's man is born without any inherent ideas[6]. He "is born with an emotional mechanism, just as he is born with a cognitive mechanism; but at birth, *both* are *tabula rasa*" (Rand, 1964, p. 28) (hence man is not even rational by nature). So in the original condition, in the pristine stage of nature the nature of men is nothing, i.e. nothing in particular – *tabula rasa* – a slate on which experiences will be written (*auf dem Wege der Anschauung*). If morality was not of itself inherent in man's nature, it must be declared how it comes into him from

without. It is from these experiences that moral principles will be formed. By what means does man first become aware of "good and evil"? asks Rand and answers that "by means of physical sensation of *pleasure or pain*" (Rand, 1964, p. 17)[7].

"In epistemology [Rand's] Objectivism rests the power to grasp reality in the hands of individual rational beings, such as ourselves, who possess the kind of faculty that has the capacity to think..." (Machan, 1994, p. 7). "Knowledge, for any conscious organism, is the means of survival; to a living consciousness, every "is" implies "ought" (Rand, 1964, p. 22). If *is* is *good* that implies *ought*, then *ought* must be explained by means of *is* which itself has to be defined in terms of *ought* (vicious circle). Moreover, if exact thought develops gradually, there arises the epistemological question of the criterion of certitude. If man is a finite (and imperfect) being, his sensuous representations or ideas must be obscure and confused since they necessarily follow obscure and confused sensuous impulses (which are the motives to actions). What guarantee have we that present thought is exact, positive and definitive? Man acts, but he knows not what for. What, in particular, is the epistemological and logical relation of exact, positive thought to anthropomorphism? If the preservation of the concrete individual's existence alone gives all human action meaning and value, then it is itself the absolute norm and as such is inaccessible to any rational criticism and justification. What is the supreme end of life? Why does man come to exist and should he exist as man?[8].

According to Engels' classification of sciences, ethics belongs among the historical sciences and there absolute truths are rarer than in natural sciences. Good and evil are exclusively the subject of morality, a branch of science dealing with the history of mankind and there finite truths (*endgültigen Wahrheiten letzter Instanz*) are almost non-existent (Masaryk, 1936, p. 220).

The materialism and empiricism of both Marx and Rand abhor a thought of good-in-itself or the immortality of soul as a source of innateness to know, to apprehend things, to know good and evil, and direct or govern a man's actions so that they lead to a life in which evil is avoided and good achieved. The only reality is what the senses can perceive. The Platonic doctrine that the senses are feeble, untrustworthy guides that perceive only the symbols of the real things is thus rejected.

### Principles of Ethics

For Marx and Engels the content of morality is the idea of genuinely human morality (Masaryk, 1936, p. 22). In order to be a man, one must recognize the equal rights of other men. One man, one vote has been claimed on grounds of equality and fraternity, but man also demands economic rights which means that it is not only political equality and fraternity, but also economic equality. Man must be freed from real need and real misery to achieve the liberation of becoming himself (Marcuse, 1968, p. 72). Thus, if the idea of humanity is to be put into practice, a social organization is demanded which provides for

free from the exploitation (the uncompensated appropriation by some of the products of the labour of others) of man by man.

For Marx, however, morality is relative. He follows Smith's polarization of men between egoistic and altruistic beings and, like Smith, considers altruism in man extremely weak (Marx and Engels, 1956). Marx's primitive man living in the communal mode of production was altruistic. Then followed periods of egoism, greed and lust for power characterizing the slave-owning, the feudal, and the capitalist modes of production, to be followed ultimately by communism – another period of altruism. This ethical division into socio-economic epochs is supplemented by a division into two classes, each with its own morality. There is no common morality (Masaryk, 1936, pp. 225-7). It can be argued, however, that in reality Marx's classes do not exist, either socially or economically. They are but abstract concepts/types and the same can be said about class morality. Society is structured not only socio-economically, but also ethically. Having taken his bearing from empirical reality Marx nonetheless winds up with a Utopian prescription. His ethical relativism is irreconcilable with common-sense ethics.

For Rand, the content of the moral law is the idea of the individual man's right to fully free (selfish) existence[9].

What is the sanction (*Begründung*) of morality? The criterion of ethical action, with both Marx and Rand, is sought (in a purely socio-economic manner with Marx, and psychological manner with Rand) in the consequences of such action. For Rand a specific individual man "must be beneficiary of his own moral actions" (Rand, 1964, p. ix). *Good* is expressed in terms of the feeling of a specific individual. On the other hand, for Marx, *good* and *right* is what is desired by a majority (exploited mass), a course of action which is conducive to social development towards Communism. Since capitalists will not surrender their position voluntarily, a revolutionary struggle must be *good* because only through it can the working class abolish the source of its economic and political oppression.

In Rand's *Objectivist Ethics*, happiness is the purpose of ethics, but not the standard. The standard of value of Rand's ethics (by which man judges what is good or evil) "is *man's life*, or: that which is required for man's survival *qua* man" (Rand, 1964, p. 23). She challenges emotions guided by whims (desires whose source, nature and meaning one does not know) as the premiss of ethics and argues that reason is man's basic means of survival, and that man needs ethics, a *code of ethics*, in order to survive. "Ethics is an objective, metaphysical necessity of man's survival" (Rand, 1964, p. 23). All morality reduces to the command: *Will to live*. Thinking and productive work are two essential methods of survival of a rational being. Man, in order to remain human, has the obligation to create. Whoever is man should create; whoever is man must be a creator. And what should he create? Man in his own image (circular and unspecified).

Rand's approach rests the validity of the moral laws on the inference of the

feelings of pleasure and pain as the central term of reference of ethical determinations. Since every satisfied desire is accompanied with pleasure the expectation of the pleasure is, therefore, the ultimate motive of all willing; and every particular object is willed and valued only as a means for gaining this pleasure. No other standard of value can be admitted. This position is fortified by the biological law that if creatures should find pleasure in what is hurtful, and pain in what is advantageous, they would soon cease to exist. Thus Rand (1964):

the ultimate *value* ... is the organism's *life*. An *ultimate* value is that final goal or end to which all lesser goals are the means – and it sets the standard by which all lesser goals are *evaluated*. An organism's life is its *standard of value*: that which furthers its life is the *good*, that which threatens it is the *evil* ... the physical sensation of pleasure is a signal indicating that the organism is pursuing the *right* course of action. The physical sensation of pain is a warning signal of danger, indicating that the organism is pursuing the *wrong* course of action" (pp. 17-18)[10].

The question is, can man choose between pleasure and pain, or do they possess man and attract him before he can choose? Nevertheless, for Rand (and Nietzsche), the important thing is not whether judgements, knowledge and convictions are true, but whether they help the individual, whether they further his life.

However, the test for pleasure, whether seeking to measure its intensity or its quality, must in any case be subjective. And the question as to which of two pleasures is the better can be decided only by those who have experienced both. Moreover, it would seem that however well suited pleasure might be as a test for the static individual, it cannot be regarded as a test of value for the guidance of a progressive being because a condition of progress involves a lack of adaptation between the individual and the environment, and any progress will necessarily bring about pain. "If the individual really acts on his knowledge, he is led either to struggle against the status quo or to renunciation. Knowledge does not help him attain happiness, yet without it he reverts to reified relationships (Marcuse, 1968, p. 166).

What motivates man to act morally? Moralists of all schools recognize that conscience is as much given fact as other facts and phenomena. Were there no kernel of sentiment, mankind could hardly have reached its present moral stage.

Marx and Engels do not provide any direct answer as to what brings man to moral action. It can be argued, however, that Marx's opposition to capitalist exploitation is motivated not only by his perception of the capitalist mode of production (based on the private ownership of the means of production) as economically erroneous, but also because it is unjust, because it is (in the final analysis) the source of economic and political oppression of the working class, and as such it arouses his conscience. If capitalism were only economically incorrect, it seems doubtful that Marx would have written *Das Kapital* (Marx, 1954). He himself admits that capitalism is economically superior to earlier socio-economic formations – why then should a Communist system be

substituted for it? In order to justify this change, Marx can hardly draw on evidence afforded by historical experience. Why should there be a struggle for equality? Why, on what grounds, should Communism be accepted? If there was no common-sense ethics, if men had no internal reasons, drawn from their own moral soul (consciousness), for equality and if they saw no evil in human misery and suffering under capitalism, then Marx's Communism would have posed no danger to capitalism, and socialism would have probably never materialized.

From Feuerbach's materialistic humanism, Marx and Engels advanced to economic determinism where the production relations are the real foundations of all of what is recognized as ideology (including ethics)(see, for example, Engels (1962)). However, in the final analysis Marx violates his own economic determinism and appeals to philosophy to pass the judgement that Communism is the final stage in the development of mankind. If there was no consciousness, from where would have come the promised highest stage of social development – the emancipation of working people of all lands? From a recurrent revolutionary struggle? *Das Kapital*, as well as historical materialism, generally reflects the dualism of moralism and amorism. While there is a rejection of moralizing and the appeal to the scientific approach at the same time, there is an appeal to the moral sentiments of the reader against the injustice of capitalism (Masaryk, 1936, pp. 217-22).

Rand would like to be seen as a reformer of the deformed morality and the intellectual creator of a new Objectivist society, fully free-rooted in the virtue of selfishness. Her concept of man as a being determined originally and in his own nature solely by regard to his own weal or woe cannot avoid asking, what brings man to moral action? Rand solves the problem by moral trading which may be summed up in the formula; I give to you so that you may give to me, i.e. uncoerced exchange benefiting both independent equals as traders, by their independent judgement. Thus, when each trader finds his own happiness all will be happy. For Rand, "the principle of *trade* is the only rational ethical principle for all human relationships, personal and social, private and public, spiritual and material. It is the principle of *justice*" (Rand, 1964, p. 31). But can *each* be identified with *all*? This might be possible perhaps if each received his happiness directly from trading with angelic beings who take into account all his specific individual circumstances. But men as traders would never be perfectly equal, and they do not trade in heaven. There will always be inequality (men can be equals only *sub specie aeternitatis*) and thus, inevitably, some men will gain while others will be injured. Rand cannot say that if each individual is well, all of society is well too. Her ethics of pleasure denies the innate disinterested kindness of men towards one another. If being selfish is so natural, then no social institutions would be strong enough to withstand its pressure. If each man really knew how to become happy, there would not be so much self-inflicted unhappiness. The motto "Seek your own happiness" is not, then, so easy to carry into effect. Conscious striving after happiness and pleasure yields unhappiness (Mill).

If the will of man is in the last resort always determinable only by his own weal or woe, the motive for his moral action is comprehensible only on the supposition that he sees in it the surest, simplest and most intelligent means under the given relations for bringing about his own happiness (Windelband, 1958, p. 515). Morality thus appears to be only endemonistic shrewdness, polished egoism, the refined cunning of the man who is familiar with life, and has seen that to be happy he can pursue no better path than to act morally, even if not to be moral. Hand in hand with this concept of the natural selfishness of men, man's education to ethical action consists in following a low system of impulses, working through power and authority, with the aid of fear and hope. It can be argued that in so far as a man is motivated solely by his selfishness, to procure good for himself, he cannot really be virtuous. Any action would probably have a vast number of consequences which the individual man cannot possibly foresee. Also, there would hardly be scope for actions which are not obligatory yet permissible. Also, if pleasure is the only good, then man would be under as much obligation to produce pleasure for himself as for another man.

How can man come out of himself and enter socially into the interests of his neighbours? Christianity, with its command to love one's neighbour, appears to both Marx and Rand servile, weak and devoid of energy.

Marx is not able to distinguish love and sentimentality, therefore he rejects the morality of love. His own humanitarian ideal is far too intellectual, one-sided and positivistic[11]. Rand's ethics, on the other hand, are not totally devoid of man's love for his neighbour. Nevertheless, her

love, friendship, respect, admiration are the emotional responses of one man to the virtues of another, the spiritual payment given in exchange for the personal, selfish pleasure which one man derives from the virtues of another man's character ... In spiritual issues, a trader is a man who does not seek to be loved for his weaknesses or flaws, only for his virtues, and who does not grant his love to the weaknesses or the flaws of others, only to their virtues (Rand, 1964, pp. 31-2)[12].

Her ethics do not require individual sacrifices since the rational interests of men are best served by trade. Her love is new love – creative and hard.

To love is to value. Only a rationally selfish man, a man of *self-esteem*, is capable of love – because he is the only man capable of holding firm, consistent, uncompromising, unbetrayed values. The man who does not value himself, cannot value anything or anyone (Rand, 1964, p. 32).

The burning question, regarding the political and socio-economic order, has always been as to the value for man's happiness of the social union. For Marx, any socio-economic formation based on the private ownership of means of production is not capable of creating conducive environment for the happiness of the working class. For Rand, the socio-economic order which exists and has come into being historically has lost its immediate validity and naïve valuation. It somehow has to justify itself before the critical consciousness, and prove its right to existence by advantages which it yields for the happiness of the individual (Windelband, 1958, pp. 501 *et seq.*). Following in the footsteps of economic liberalism Rand wants her Government to intervene only negatively

in individual affairs, to perform night-watchman service to protect egotistic interests: "man's right to his own life, to his own liberty, to his own property and to the pursuit of his own happiness" (Rand, 1964, p. 32)[13].

"Rand denies that one can have both massive oppression of human individuality and the creativity needed for a prospering scientific society" (Machan, 1994, p. 6). It is doubtful that there is a necessary correlation between creativity and oppression. Man does not stop creating only he does not do it so openly, and that numerous inventions never make it to the market does not mean they do not exist. The backwardness in simple technology in Soviet society does not mean that it is poor in inventions and does not have inventors capable of devising advanced technology, but that consumer technology did not particularly belong to that society's priorities. Similarly, the powerful personalities and leading spirits of the past did not pay much attention to vulgar matters of technique, and the mass of people were bound by traditions where knowledge was handed down from father to son, from master to apprentice (Riha, 1985a, p. 107).

It is worth mentioning that, in common with Marx, Rand repudiates the objectivity and neutrality of science. For her "science is a value only because it expands, enriches and protects man's life. It is not a value outside that context" (Rand, 1964, p. 83). Marx views science from his "class perspective". For him advances of science, under capitalism, transformed the worker into an appendage to the machine. Marx values science only with respect to its applicability to the production process and for making labour more intelligent and creative. Under socialism, science, education and arts are of a value only if they contribute towards needs of the working people. This approach towards science, from both Marx and Rand, includes the affirmation that "all science is life-conditioned, reality-oriented, historically conditioned and situationally bound" (Marcuse, 1968, p. 33).

Rand states that the USSR did not need "to be feared all that much militarily since one cannot really expect a slave society to keep up a technology that would make it militarily competitive with societies that enjoyed substantial individual liberty" (Machan, 1994, p. 6). Even if the rather doubtful assertion on the inability of keeping up (sputnik, etc.) is upheld, then technology is not usually the only important factor which wins a war[14].

Rand's contempt for collectivism and altruism drives her to form a social Darwinism and uncontrolled capitalism. She holds that

since nature does not guarantee automatic security, success and survival to any human being, it is only the dictatorial presumptuousness and the moral cannibalism of the altruist-collectivist code that permits a man to suppose (or idly to daydream) that *he* can somehow guarantee such security to some men at the expense of others ... Only individual men have the right to decide when and whether they wish to help others; society – as an organized political system – has no rights in the matter at all (Rand, 1964, pp. 80-81).

Thus the social crisis of capitalism is nothing but nature's revenge on altruist-collectivist attempts to establish unnatural forms of life. She believes that a pure system of capitalism has never yet existed because Government controls

and regulations have been "undercutting and distorting it from the start". Thus, capitalism is not the system of the past but of the future. In contrast with Marx, it is not economic conditions that determine social relations but Rand masters her moral view in the call for a full, pure, uncontrolled unregulated *laissez-faire* capitalism (with the voluntary Government financing) — with a separation of State and economics (Rand, 1964, p. 33). Typical to this kind of reasoning is the assumption that the harmony of general and private interests would result of *itself* from the undisturbed course of individual actions. Moreover, Rand overlooks the fact that the reasons for the growing Government controls and regulations were inherent in the attempts to adhere to economic individualism. To follow her ideas of capitalism would necessitate a parting with political individualism and democracy. A society based on unequal abilities would be unsatisfactory to a majority of voters who, unless their democratic right is abrogated, would demand Government intervention in the economic process.

By making man selfish, Rand seeks to save man from decadence. The decline of civilization can be halted by *true* men, men rejecting the altruist-collectivist morality. However, since nature alone cannot be trusted to produce replicas of a true man — John Galt (Rand's hero) — Rand comes up with desiderata/virtues of rationality, productiveness and pride which if followed are to guide men to moral rejuvenation — perfection? "The fast steed, which will bring you to perfection is pain!" (Meister Eckhart) (Machan, 1994, pp. 9, 11). Those choosing not to follow her commandments are condemned to surviving as mental parasites "who march into the abyss", subhuman creatures — "the ugly horror of the antirational periods", zombies — not "knowing one's own purposes and motives" (Rand, 1964, pp. 24-6). It is up to the individual to choose between the morals of men (over-man/*Übermensch*, masters?), and the morals of subhumans (the ordinary, everyday man of the common herd, slaves?). The basic political principle of Objectivist ethics is that "no man ... has the right to ... initiate the use of physical compulsion against any man" (Rand, 1964, p. 32). While this statement refers to *man*, it is suspiciously silent as to forms of pressure to bear on *subhumans* in order to keep them from interfering with the interests of *men*. "*Ceterum libertas et speciosa nomina praetextuntur; nec quisquam alienum servitium et dominationem sibi concupivit ut non eadem ista vocabula usurparet*" [15].

Rand has her religion together with a hero/saviour (the higher-man who sublimates the raw will to power to a will to create, to overcome himself, a man who overcomes himself to become a creative being is but the Nietzsche's over-man), it is just non-theistic and non-teleological and is a religion of aimless *sui generis* individualism [16]. According to Rand, "rationality is man's basic virtue" (Rand, 1964, p. 25). However, her rationality, tied to the rational practice of the concrete individual subject, is essentially private. In the end, she supposes that if individuals followed the path of rationality it would result in a rational society. However, the rational determination of society, itself a mere phantom (in which the happiness of the individual is supposed to be realized), is left outside the sphere of rationalization.

A Rand's follower, Machan, states;

In judging human beings and their conduct, we need also to consider, first, their nature and then asses how well a given person or some given conduct accords with human nature — whether it is rational ... Both the fact that a person is a human being and that he or she is a given individual must be considered in evaluating that person and his or her conduct" (Machan, 1994, p. 12).

Neither Rand nor Machan, however, answer the question: Who is going to evaluate and judge human beings? Since it cannot be God (*der an sich selbst überseiende*), but man or a man-made State, from where would the man-judge or the State have received their right to do so? Instead of using man's life as the standard for value, Machan appeals to experience and wisdom and reason of judges. Thus, instead of man's life as standard he has rather a standard for man's life. What will these omnipotent judges assign to the highest values? [17]

It can be argued that justice and morality are real social factors, not only validated by their usefulness for the individual, but also rooted in the feeling of humanity given to man. Rand's and Marx's positivistic amoralism is erroneous because contrary to the principles of positivism it regards a positive fact, the evident awareness of the binding sentiment of humanity (*Gliedhaftigkeit*) as an illusion. The inconsistency of this approach ends with both Marx (definitely) and Rand (perhaps) promising a genuinely human morality of the future. Marx holds that it will definitely come once the economic conditions are changed. The foremost goal of Marxists is economic equality or the consummation of man's selfless nature. The demand for this, however, rests on humanitarian ideals. And if men do not acknowledge these ideals, who then shall effect this equality? And how? Marxists (denying morality) reply: the State is to execute the demand for equality. But what is the State? To Marxists it is a legal and political superstructure (to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness) which rises on the economic structure of society (Marx, 1950, p. 329). Thus the socialist State, as the expression of interests of working people (and their class consciousness/ideology/ethics) ends the crisis in Marxism. Ideology, particularly ethical ideology, is finally recognized, and morality (class morality) and ethical endeavour is acknowledged to be no less real than economic aspirations. In fact economic striving can ultimately be understood as ethical. Rand, on the other hand, is necessarily sceptical of the future, having dismissed teleology. If her mankind is to have a future, man must realize that he must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself. In this way, he achieves his own (relativistic?) happiness — man's highest moral purpose (Rand, 1964, p. 27).

Some may argue that ethics should not be materialistic, that there can be no adequate morality without a religious foundation since man is not only a body, but also a soul [18]. These critics can say that both Marx and Rand failed to learn the meaning of life and society from Jesus, and it can be added that they equally failed to learn from Hume or Mill or Schopenhauer; even Zarathustra in the last instance feels sympathy for the Over-man.

NO

WHA! / 17

### Conclusion

The dualism of altruism/collectivism and egoism/individualism present in both Marx's and Rand's writings is highly significant because it contrasts the individual constantly with society. In reality, however, one can see a society organized of individuals, and solidarity as well as antagonism between individuals and society. Thus egoism and altruism can appear in a new light where there is no absolute dichotomy between the two. It can be said that, while egoism is directed towards one's own private weal, the altruistic motives are directed towards the universal weal, without which the private weal is not possible (Hugo Grotius). Thus, the social need is not the refined product of shared self-seeking, but a primary, constitutive characteristic of human nature (Hobbes). Individual freedom cannot be absolute, suspended in the air, it cannot be isolated from society. Individual freedom will always be but a constrained freedom.

Marx's cultural-historical and social dualism fall together with psychological dualism. Great eras of mankind do not follow one another as absolute contradictions, classes are not absolutely distinct. There is more unselfish love and solidarity in society than Rand admits and we can hope that this solidarity will grow stronger. Both Marx and Rand fall prey to extremism when they divide the entire society between an angelic proletariat and the satanic capitalists, or rational humans and whimsical subhumans.

Neither ethical egoism nor collectivism can serve as a useful paradigm on which a humanly acceptable and economically functional socio-economic order can be modelled. Both are but self-defeating Utopias. Neither of them provide a framework for the harmonious unfolding of unsociable-sociability in man. An essential precondition for the success of socialism was not only economic but also spiritual collectivization, and the system's lack of success in the eradication of selfishness in man has been at the root of its collapse[19]. On the other hand, the idea of uncontrolled and unregulated capitalism, seeing the market as the unsurpassed master of calculation, has from the beginning been undermined by the existence of unselfish love, genuine compassion and empathy of man for other men. Man is neither an angel nor a devil, neither an egoist nor an altruist-collectivist, but a being between these two[20]. What men should be seeking is an order that is neither capitalist nor collectivist – a humane order of society (Röpke, 1944).

A cry of distress can be detected in Rand's writings from the exceptionally gifted, yet socially estranged, individual – Anna Rosenbaum – who was seeking to emancipate herself from a perceived or actual repression by the herd, at first in her native Russia and perhaps later also in America (Branden, 1986). However, in her ethics she fails to give any indication of a peculiar value which would have justified her in any such emancipation. It is hard to agree with Machan's assertion that Ayn Rand presented a "profoundly philosophical answer to Marx's ideas" (Machan, 1994, p. 15)[21]. Rand's contribution cannot really rate as an original philosophy let alone as a profoundly philosophical answer to anything. It displays all too familiar a pattern of hubris of the

intellect, the cult of the soulless self-sufficient man, and the modern superstitions of relativism and positivism. It provides no adequate account of man's beginnings or ends from which to derive philosophical bearing. A personal affirmation of *tabula rasa* in the state of nature is something less than a profound philosophy. Her sole contribution consists in the courage of paradox – for Ayn Rand the true egoist preaching the virtue of selfishness refuted herself by beginning to prove her Objectivist ethics to others (see, for example, Peikoff (1991)).

Efforts to develop strong individualism are a very different matter from the propagation of selfishness. Moderate individualism, really philosophic and ethical individualism, desires that in society, by the united effort distinct types, characters and personalities may be developed. It can be argued that it is hard to conceive of the individual as an isolated monad deriving his essence from himself *qua* individual. Man is able to form himself only when in close touch with other men. He can create and sustain himself as a human being only when he enjoys intimate and multiform communion with other beings similarly endowed. Each mind is a torch that must be lit from outside itself. "*Ein Teil ist nicht ohne den anderen*" (Riha, 1985b).

### Notes

1. This article is based on my discussant's response to a paper by Tibor R. Machan, *Ayn Rand versus Karl Marx*, presented to the 68th Annual International Conference, Western Economic Association International, Lake Tahoe, Nevada, 20-24 June.
2. "Man" is used in this article as meaning "human"; it does not refer to gender.
3. The concept of nature, Myrdal writes, is a "cliché that functions just like every other political recommendation". It is used "when anyone, in some political question, wants to assert something without adducing proof of it" (Myrdal, G., *Das politische Element in der national ökonomischen Doktrinbildung*, 1932, p. 177).
4. See also Stirner (1893).
5. All extreme individualism is false in principle, for the simple reason that no ego exists or can exist alone. What kind of supreme Being is he who is born into a family and grows up in a community? Only theorizing short-sightedness, however profound it may be in appearance, can seek to isolate the individual from relationships to other individuals. There is no self just in and for itself (*an-und-für sich*). Extreme individualism fails morally and theoretically, because it places the human individual on a par with God.
6. According to Locke: first man is consciousness – he exists, then he is sensation, and finally he reflects. And it is in the reflection about these sensory-obtained ideas that man gains knowledge of the world and the ability to articulate moral principles. Locke explained his contention that man is born idealess in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1689.
7. If the only reality is sensation, then the "good life" must consist of seeking pleasant sensations (Epicurus).
8. Egoism and materialism can hardly provide an answer to the meaning of life if death really marked the end of man's existence. What is in this life attainable is evidently very precious because in order to gain it man must take risks, to stake all, to undergo dangers to his life, suffering, misery and failures. And what might he attain at the end? He might have learned to know himself in mutuality (*Gezweigung*) with others like himself.

9. Rand's assumption of the essentially egoistic character of human nature leads necessarily to the separation of the question as to the criterion of morality and the kind of knowledge by which it is apprehended, from that as to the sanction of the moral commands and the motives for obeying them.
10. However, every pleasure is the removal of pain. Pleasure, therefore, cannot be the *good* or happiness, because it contains its own opposite (Plato).
11. See, for example, Engels (1954) and Marx and Engels (1957).
12. According to Rand, "rationality is man's basic virtue, the source of all his other virtues. Man's basic vice, the source of all his evils, is the act of unfocusing his mind ... the refusal to know", (Rand, 1964, p. 25).
13. Rand's reasoning owes much to Herbert Spencer who held that the State should keep the individual from interfering with the freedom of other individuals. Spencer's (and Rand's) State is thus essentially negative in its significance.
14. It is easier to do battle with an army of "slaves" (united by a common "irrational" ideal) than to attempt to organize a diverse army of individuals who subscribe each to his own ideal. Dissension will always be greater in the latter unless there is a uniting belief in a common weal. If this belief is present, then the contention that selfishness is the only virtue cannot be upheld.
15. "Freedom, however, and specious names are their pretexts, but no man has ever been ambitious to enslave another or to win dominion for himself without using those very same words" (Tacitus, 1969).
16. Hegel declared that the universe is God; Feuerbach said: Man, humanity is God; Marx proclaimed: the proletariat, the mass of proletariat is God. Rand answered: No! I am God. Humanism that derives from egoism becomes theology.
17. How does rationality come into existence if man begins life as a *tabula rasa*? Who is to judge what is rational or irrational as each individual's perception of the world is essentially subjective?
18. "All that holds human life together and that has merit and validity is of a mental and spiritual nature and this realm of the mind and spirit exists only through the consciousness of truth and right, through the comprehension of Ideas." From Hegel's address to his students at the opening of his lectures in Berlin in 1818: Hegel, G. W. F. (1843), *Werke*, 2nd ed., Berlin, p. xi; (quoted in Marcuse, 1968, p. 41).
19. Socialist collectivism became the worst despotism in the name of the sovereignty of the people. "By idolatrously identifying God with the political interests of their sect, by concentrating their thoughts and their efforts on the powers of evil, they were doing their best to guarantee the triumph of that Satan against whom they were supposed to be fighting," (Huxley, 1972, pp. 175-6).
20. "Those who crusade, not *for* God in themselves, but *against* the devil in others, never succeed in making the world better, but leave it either as it was, or sometimes even perceptibly worse than it was, before the crusade began. By thinking primarily of evil we tend, however excellent our intentions, to create occasions for evil to manifest itself", (Huxley, 1972, p. 175).
21. For a penetrating criticism for Marx-Engels' ethical position see Masaryk (1899). A constructive critique of ethical and economic collectivism as well as economic liberalism has been presented by followers of the Freiburg school during the 1940-1960 period. The following works are particularly recommended: Böhm (1971); Eucken (1940; 1948; 1949; 1951; 1952); Röpke (1944); Rüstow (1949).

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