

“RADICALS FOR CAPITALISM”

Ayn Rand and Youth During the 1960s

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*There is a fundamental conviction which some people never acquire,
some hold only in their youth, and a few hold to the end of their days
— the conviction that ideas matter.*

*In one's youth that conviction is experienced as a self-evident absolute,
and one is unable fully to believe that there are people who do not share it.*

That ideas matter means that knowledge matters, that truth matters, that one's mind matters.

And the radiance of that certainty, in the process of growing up, is the best aspect of youth.

—Ayn Rand



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INTRODUCTION

They had deposited him carelessly onto a slag heap at the bottom of a shadowy ravine. Now, shot in the chest and convulsing with pain, he desperately struggles to stay alive long enough to deliver his urgent knowledge to anyone who would listen. Driving along the edge of the ravine, the industrialist Hank Rearden suddenly notices what appears to be a human hand frantically waving for help. He recognizes the owner of the hand – known only by his nickname, the Wet Nurse. A boy fresh out of college, already mingling with Washington power brokers, but someone whom Rearden had initially viewed only with contempt, condemning him as a “Non-Absolute”: “The boy had no inkling of any concept of morality; it had been bred out of him by his college; this had left him with an odd frankness, naïve and cynical at once, like the innocence of a savage.”¹

Yet Rearden was still drawn to help, for over the past several months the boy’s uncertainty had been giving way to conviction, his evasion to ideology. There might yet be a chance that another young mind would not have to be sacrificed on the altar of collectivism, pragmatism, and altruism. But Rearden had come too late; the men in Washington had gotten to the boy first, for the boy had learned too much. As he lay dying in Rearden’s arms, however, the Wet Nurse seemed more alive, more intense than ever. He had achieved the liberation that comes from the consciousness of one’s enslavement; all he had been taught over the years was wrong, but the great man who held him represented “the image of that which [the boy] had not known to be his values.” Now, the boy had found purpose: to inform Rearden that the government was out to destroy the man, not in spite of his greatness, but precisely because of it.

And for the first time, Rearden calls the Wet Nurse by his real name: Tony, “a full absolute.” Admiring the boy’s strength, the implacable Rearden bends down to kiss the boy’s forehead, “a father’s recognition granted to a son’s battle.” The boy’s life quietly slips away, and Rearden

¹ Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Plume, 1999), 362.

immediately feels an uncontrollable rage, “a desire to kill” not the “thug” who had fired the bullet nor the bureaucrats who had hired him, but “the boy’s teachers who had delivered him, disarmed, to the thug’s gun.” They were the true murderers who “took pleasure in crippling the young minds entrusted to their care” by denying the very existence of reason.²

The Wet Nurse is one of the most enduring characters in the so-called “bible of Objectivism,” Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*. Although the boy’s story occupies less than ten pages of the 1,168-page novel, his is the only presence which lingers in both the protagonists and the antagonists. Before he meets the man who will change his life, the Wet Nurse encapsulates the spirit of Rand’s villains: the wishy-washy pragmatism and the protean morals. But under the influence of Hank Rearden, this potential evildoer demonstrates his capacity for good; upon the night of his death, he discovers how to lead a moral life. This is the only character in Rand’s apocalyptic novel who is able to cross over from the side of immorality to rationality, to achieve redemption in the very act of crawling up the ravine. Furthermore, he is the only character who is visibly young in age, not only spirit, a notable fact in a massive book otherwise free of children.

The reason for this single character’s striking shift was rooted in Rand’s rare optimism towards a specific sector of society: youth. Rand believed that from this population would be drawn the vast majority of the “New Intellectuals,” those who would overhaul the entire basis of the *status quo*. In Rand’s opinion, modern culture had been created as well as destroyed by intellectuals; the “New Intellectuals” would resurrect it.³ Youth were the most idealistic, the most loyal to their firm convictions, and therefore the most open to new and challenging ideas. At one point in *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand had written, “To hold an unchanging youth is to reach, at the end, the vision with which one started,” and it was this unswerving sense of moral purpose which attracted Rand so

² Ibid., 989-994.

³ Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Signet Books, 1961), 38, 54.

eagerly to the young.⁴ Thus, during the 1960s, careful young readers of *Atlas Shrugged* would see in the figure of the Wet Nurse a jarring embodiment of what they must do in order to advance the intertwined causes of reason, egoism, and capitalism.

And indeed, many a reader would become acquainted with Rand's unforgettable characters, as *Atlas Shrugged* sold an impressive 125,000 copies within a mere year of its publication. Immediately, Rand was inundated with letters from young, adoring fans. Two years later, in 1959, Rand would use this fan mail as the basis for a mailing list to announce the start of a lecture series on her philosophy. Ads for the lectures plastered the pages of *The New York Times*' Sunday edition, and postcards were hand-inserted into copies of Rand's books. Rand's partners throughout this publicizing process were Nathaniel Branden, a Canadian who had met Rand in 1950 while majoring in psychology at UCLA, and Nathaniel's wife, Barbara. With Nathaniel's assistance, Rand made major strides in disseminating her ideas, as evidenced by the fact that enrollment at the Nathaniel Branden Institute (NBI) skyrocketed with every passing year. By the end of 1961, the mailing list consisted of over 10,000 individuals who were drawn to Objectivism, a shocking philosophy which unabashedly championed atomistic individualism, Aristotelian rationality, and selfishness.⁵

How is it possible that during the 1960s, the supposed heyday of "post-capitalism," that a philosophy celebrating unadulterated capitalism could garner the support of so many young people?⁶ Answering such a question requires an openness to Rand's place in the intellectual history of youth, for as Lewis Feuer once said, "Students are above all intellectuals, persons with ideas."⁷ Usually, in the realm of high culture, merely mentioning the name Ayn Rand tends to elicit some form of distaste, whether it be a bemused smirk or dismissive scoff. Best known for her fictional works *The*

⁴ Barbara Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986), 290.

⁵ Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, eds., *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 349-356.

⁶ Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁷ Lewis Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 529.

Fountainhead (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), this mythologized novelist and philosopher continues to court controversy over her celebration of unconstrained individualism and ruthless rationality. Despite staggering book sales even to this day, Rand has largely been relegated to the margins of academic discourse, branded as a right-wing ideologue and simplistic pop writer without true intellectual value. Blatantly repudiating altruism and emotion, Rand has become a tempting target for critics on both ends of the political spectrum. Recent works have attempted to right the balance, but none explicitly addresses an undeniable phenomenon: her palliative and intoxicating role in the intellectual history of right-wing youth.⁸

Although blasted as a lone voice in the wilderness during her own day as well, none could deny her status as a cultural reference point, particularly on college campuses. Thus, even as one reviewer, joining in the general chorus of disapprobation, castigated *Atlas Shrugged* as “a masochist’s lollipop,” flocks of youth would become enamored by a philosophy which seemed to offer a potent challenge to the liberal bromides of the day.⁹ The credibility gap which existed between youth and their elders throughout the sixties was something which was echoed on the more local level by the Randian phenomenon.

Young people’s relation to Rand is therefore integral to understanding the captivating era which one historian has labeled as the beginning of “contemporary history.”¹⁰ Cultural observers went frantic over the material which youth provided, penning numerous articles in hopes that the future could somehow be glimpsed in the nation’s youth. Baby boomers occupied a special place in the American imagination; unlike their parents, who had been raised during the Depression, these children had been born to prosperity. James W. Kuhn called them “the immense generation,” for

⁸ The latest studies which have taken greater stock of Rand’s intellectual contribution include: Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); Anne C. Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* (New York: Doubleday, 2009); Mimi R. Gladstein, *Ayn Rand* (New York: Continuum, 2010), part of a series on Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers edited by John Meadowcroft.

⁹ Leslie Hanscom, “Lecture Circuit: Born Eccentric,” *Newsweek*, March 27, 1967, 007-12X, Ayn Rand Papers (ARP).

¹⁰ Geoffrey Barraclough, *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

they represented a flood of young people “inundating successive institutions, battering them and transforming them as they went.”¹¹ In other places, they were labeled “the quiet generation”; UC President Clark Kerr, at the 1959 Conference on the College Student, even went so far as to call them a kind of “pre-Organization Man” who would “be easy to handle.”¹² Yet by the end of the sixties, eyeing the devastation which youth had wrought over the cultural and political landscape, many would suddenly lament that these Spock Babies, permissively raised and pampered, had overstepped the bounds of proper social conduct.

Struggling to make sense of the enigmatic sixties, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. once called attention to the sheer “velocity of history” during that time.¹³ Because youth are particularly vulnerable to change, it is thus crucial to make Rand a part of our memory of the sixties whirlwind, for these were the years when she garnered her most enthusiastic supporters. Objectivism must be considered as more than simply temporary infatuation or psychological relief, disappearing once it had outlived its usefulness. Rather than dismissing Rand as a shallow figure, appealing to youth only at a particular phase in their lives, we must understand that her philosophy served, in Jennifer Burns’ words, as “a gateway drug to life on the right.”¹⁴ Furthermore, integrating Rand into sixties history will help to highlight what John A. Andrew has called “the other side of the sixties,” a time when conservatism was gaining the intellectual force that would later propel it to the forefront of national politics.¹⁵ Rand did not fit easily into the conservative consensus, and her appeal to right-wing youth illustrates the intricacies of debates over the proper definition of conservatism.

Rand and her devotees would repeatedly deny that they were conservatives, for they professed to stand for a very specific ideology which pried apart conservatism’s uneasy alliance

¹¹ James W. Kuhn, “The Immense Generation,” *Columbia University Forum* 2 (Summer 1973): 9.

¹² “Is Apathy on the Way Out?,” *Mademoiselle*, May 1960, 134.

¹³ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “The Velocity of History,” *Newsweek*, July 6, 1970, 29-30.

¹⁴ Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.

¹⁵ John A. Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 10.

between religious traditionalism and laissez-faire capitalism. In the eyes of libertarian-oriented youth, Rand called attention to the philosophical contradictions between the capitalist ethos of innovation and self-interest and Christian codes of duty to others and self-denial. Even more than its celebration of capitalist egoism, though, Objectivism was noteworthy for youth because of its metaphysical attitude toward life and its emphasis on the supremacy of ideas. It therefore offered young people a philosophy by which they could pose as “free-floating intellectuals,” untainted by emotional or pragmatic considerations. Yet, as will be illustrated by this study, young Objectivists also hesitated to achieve complete theoretical consistency before carrying out practical action. This productive tension gave birth to Objectivism’s political variant, which Rand herself condemned as plagiarism of her ideas: libertarianism (and its close cousin, anarchism).

In the face of what she saw as the appropriation of her work, Rand insisted that Objectivism was *not* an organized political movement, but a philosophical, cultural and intellectual movement. Transcending both liberalism and conservatism, she and her young fans were “radicals for capitalism.”¹⁶ They were radicals in the most fundamental sense of the word, going to the “root” of society’s sufferings in order to locate their integrated source. If altruism was this despised source, capitalism therefore represented the opposite extreme underlying an ideal social system. Rather than advocating an economics tempered by social concerns, Rand called for an “economic society” in which productivity and money were understood as measures of man’s worth, virtue, and individuality. The mixed economy that had become entrenched during the New Deal era carried with it not only economic implications, but cultural and political reverberations, most notably collectivism and self-sacrifice. Capitalism, on the other hand, was the political expression of something more fundamental: reason in epistemology and egoism in ethics. Therefore, studying

¹⁶ Rand, “Check Your Premises: Choose Your Issues,” *The Objectivist Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (January 1962): 1.

youthful engagement with Rand's ideas requires a look at the underlying cultural values which were seen as antecedent and vital to their political correlate.

According to Joanne Freeman, the study of political culture involves focusing on “patterns of shared values, assumptions, and behaviors associated with public life.”¹⁷ Within Freeman's framework, this thesis will thus seek to address the intuitive “values, assumptions and behaviors” of youth who were strongly influenced by Rand's ideas throughout the sixties, particularly those who did not move on to libertarianism immediately but who attempted to situate themselves at the nexus of culture and politics while still remaining loyal to Objectivist principles.

Chapter One focuses on the primary sources of Rand's appeal during the sixties, providing a rough anatomy of youth responses to Objectivism. The most widely shared assumptions concerned the bankruptcy of modern culture; the fascistic potential of altruism; and the immorality of pragmatism and consensus in politics. Viewing non-absolutism as a slippery slope to a collectivist society without freedom, students of Objectivism embraced the values of objective reality, individualism, egoism, and capitalism. Underlying all of these was the most cherished faculty, reason, for it was reason which encapsulated one of Objectivism's most fundamental themes: “To think or not to think. Therein lies man's only form of freedom.”¹⁸ Chapter Two will transition to the methods which Rand and her associates employed to disseminate Objectivist teachings and how these efforts gave rise to a specific brand of right-wing youth culture centered in universities and NBI. Despite the theoretical orientation described in Chapter Two, Chapter Three examines a turning-point in right-wing youth history: the 1964 presidential campaign for Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona. Although much has already been documented about this pivotal event, this

¹⁷ Joanne Freeman, “The Culture of Politics: The Politics of Culture,” *Journal of Policy History* 16, no. 2 (2004): 140.

¹⁸ John Kobler, “The Curious Cult of Ayn Rand,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, Nov. 11, 1961.

chapter will seek to address how students of Objectivism temporarily embraced compromise in hopes of advancing Rand's philosophy.¹⁹

In the wake of Goldwater's disillusioning defeat, Rand's most devoted followers would emphasize even more strongly the precedence of theory over political activism, but Chapter Four will seek to address how even the most loyal Objectivists grappled with the potential conflict between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.²⁰ The case will be illustrated by *Persuasion*, a periodical associated with the Metropolitan Young Republican Club and the only publication which Rand ever explicitly endorsed. *Persuasion's* development in the wake of Goldwater's campaign is a prime example of how youth attempted to keep reason and emotion clearly, though somewhat artificially, separated. In its contributions to the discourse on draft opposition, *Persuasion* illustrates the increasing politicization of young Objectivists even as Rand counseled restraint. The final chapter will culminate in the burgeoning political expression of Objectivism, libertarianism, in the wake of NBI's demise. It will describe the 1969 split between libertarian and traditionalist conservatives to show the most extreme ways in which, even under Rand's tight grasp, youth were able to exercise their own forms of political agency.

Therefore, rather than moving on to a direct examination of how Rand influenced the growth of the libertarian movement during the 1970s, this thesis will emphasize the years before outright politicization, as less militant youth attempted to navigate the relation between intellectual self-improvement and political networking. Politicization, rather than being an automatic response, was one which was fraught with tension, and it was this tension that Objectivism, which seemed to answer so much, had failed to address. Rand had once issued the following dictum: "Politics is the

¹⁹ One of the best studies of the Goldwater campaign and its place in the conservative movement is Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Nation Books, 2001).

²⁰ The distinction between *vita activa* (active life) and *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life) was originally made by Hannah Arendt. See *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) and *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

last link in the chain – the last, not the first, result of a country’s intellectual trends.”²¹ For youth who hung on to Rand’s every word, this familiar maxim would come to haunt their attempts to temper theoretical pursuits with practical ventures.

I THE QUIETEST REVOLUTION IN HISTORY

“Seated about in college-town snack shops, the young Randites talk about their intellectual leader as their fathers and mothers a generation ago talked about Karl Marx, or John Maynard Keynes, or Thorstein Veblen.”

–John Chamberlain, *The Wall Street Journal* (March 24, 1961)

In April 1964, *Clyde* magazine ceremoniously announced that if Americans would only pause and listen more keenly, they would hear the rumblings of “the quietest revolution in history.”²² This was a revolution lacking in the usual trappings of subversion, “no street corner orators, picket lines, or mob agitators.” Its precise location was undetermined, diffuse, and immeasurable; divorced from a specific time or place, it was leaving its deepest mark within the intangible realm of ideas. Several years earlier, in a less celebratory tone, Gilbert Nash of *Swank* had also taken note of this nascent revolution. Nash dubbed its unassuming standard-bearers “buckniks,” beatniks who unabashedly worshipped the dollar sign as the symbol of uncompromising individualism.²³ Clustered in dank coffee shops around Greenwich Village, these buckniks were “rebels against rebelliousness.” Bored with the Beat lifestyle, they had now veered to the opposite extreme, embracing commercialism and capitalism without regret. Instead of “cheap wine and stale cheese,” they indulged in “champagne and caviar.” *Newsweek* also poked fun at these strange revolutionaries, “militantly non-beatnik” youth who were not disheveled or ascetic, but “sprucely gowned and gray-flanneled.”²⁴ Once a

²¹ Rand, “Brief Summary,” *The Objectivist* 10, no. 9 (Sept. 1971).

²² Samuel L. Blumenfeld, “The Intellectual Revolution of the Right,” *Clyde*, April 1964, 19.

²³ Gilbert Nash, “the beat + the buck = the bucknik,” *Swank*, September 1960, 43-44, 52, 54-55.

²⁴ Hanscom, “Lecture Circuit: Born Eccentric,” *Newsweek*, March 27, 1961, 104-105.

week, they could be seen gathering at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City, a “congregation” eagerly awaiting the weekly, three-hour sermon to be delivered by their high priestess, Ayn Rand.

This is but a small sampling of the many cultural observations made throughout the sixties of the special, at times baffling, relationship between America’s treasured youth and its most notorious individualist. Percolating beneath all these commentaries was the sense that the placid and respectable outer appearances of these young intellectuals belied something deeper and perhaps more dangerous, an inner anger that might threaten the most fundamental moral premises of American culture. Indeed, adults were calling attention to a trend which was also apparent in the fan letters written to Rand throughout her lifetime. These letters presented a consistent and undeniable pattern: youth had found in Rand a therapeutic philosophy which they believed could govern the rest of their lives.

The most common reaction was one of sincere gratitude to Rand for her ability to give form to inchoate, implicit beliefs: “You put into words a morality we had only been groping for, guiltily, in a society whose mystical and irrational standards we could not accept even though we felt trapped by it.”²⁵ Rand’s writings had the capacity to give psychological fuel to those braving that tortured period between adolescence and adulthood that psychologist Kenneth Keniston termed “youth.”²⁶ One particularly intimate, unsigned letter testifies to the rejuvenating effect she had on the lost and disaffected: “I am a suicide candidate. Your book gave me the right to exist a few days longer.”²⁷ It could even convince one fan, a self-professed “altruist and socialist” to trade in his beliefs overnight in favor of pure, Randian individualism.²⁸ By offering a vision of a benevolent universe, Rand’s philosophy assumed that reason reigned supreme; its fully integrated metaphysics, which denied contradictions, provided certainty where previously there had been only doubt or evasion. Given

²⁵ Pat Longo to AR, May 19, 1974, 022-05D, ARP.

²⁶ Kenneth Keniston, “Youth, Change, and Violence,” *The American Scholar* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1968).

²⁷ Unknown to AR, October 14, 1957, 002-06D, ARP.

²⁸ John Gelski to AR, Sept. 8, 1964, 039-06A, ARP.

the role that Rand played in renewing their “sense of life,” one devotee even noted the irony of the unequal trade: “For a few cents I purchased a book that you provided and from it gained a life. For a few cents!!”²⁹ This same fan later admitted that he was writing her “a love letter,” but that it was “simply in response to yours, for yours was first, *Atlas Shrugged*.” Indeed, Rand and young people throughout the sixties were engaged in an affair of the mind, with Rand the recognized figurehead of an underground youth culture.

Rand’s books were usually spread by word of mouth, with fans recommending her novels to friends, hoping they would understand the pioneering implications of what Rand had written. At times, these individuals were sorely disappointed by the underwhelmed reactions of their former comrades. One young woman confessed that as a result of her interest in Rand, she had lost two friends, an event which she dismissed as “unimportant.”³⁰ A mother, surprisingly a supporter of Objectivism herself, wrote to Rand that her writings were “a good substitute for discussing ideas with friends” and that her daughter was finally beginning to “see the ultimate rewards for being a loner in the achievements of her brother.”³¹ On the other hand, Rand’s books could also give rise to a sense of possessiveness, as expressed by one 22-year-old devotee: “Her books are so good that most people should not be allowed to read them.”³²

Because of its tight, universalistic nature, Objectivism often appealed to youth who were leaving behind orthodox religious backgrounds. Searching for a substitute, the heady world of Objectivism seemed just the answer, a phenomenon which libertarian Jerome Tuccille satirically pointed out years later:

The crumbling walls of doctrinaire Catholicism, or heavy-fisted Judaism, leave you with a feeling of vulnerability. Your protective shell is cracking. You’re gradually becoming more and more exposed to the great agnostic world out there that the priests and brothers and rabbis have been warning you about since you were five

²⁹ Roger Steffens to AR, Feb. 11, 1973, 038-04C, ARP.

³⁰ Susan Riesel to AR, Oct. 17, 1962, 038-04C, ARP.

³¹ Ruth Albaugh to AR, Feb. 10, 1966, 040-07D, ARP.

³² Hanscom, “Lecture Circuit: Born Eccentric,” *Newsweek*, March 27, 1961, 104-5.

years old. You realize you can't go home again, but where do you go? And then you discover Galt's Gulch at the end of *Atlas Shrugged* and you know everything is going to be all right forevermore.³³

Another fan, clearly hoping that Rand would help her and her friends make sense of their newfound atheism, pleaded in strangely biblical tones, "For you see, we believe, but we know not what to do."³⁴ Nevertheless, religious youth were by no means absent from the ranks of Randian devotees, as exemplified by one student, president of Princeton's Liberal Religious Youth organization, who begged Rand to speak at their annual Unitarian-Universalist Conference.³⁵

Apart from their atheistic, Roman Catholic, or Protestant backgrounds, there is very little sociological evidence on Objectivist youth. However, it is likely that they tended to share the general characteristics of conservatives, coming from lower-middle class to middle-class homes.³⁶ More specifically, self-identified libertarians or Objectivists often tended to perceive their parents as modern-day versions of Horatio Alger heroes, pulling themselves "up from their bootstraps" without the aid of charity. One former student recalled that his childhood was filled with a special regard for ideas, and that his "parents believed that if you want something and work hard, nothing, in fact, can stop you."³⁷ Inculcated with the value that "a man is closest to himself," this student and many others believed that they had been primed since birth to accept Rand's individualistic ethos.

Rand's discussion of "looters" and "moochers" also appealed to alienated, studious outsiders: "I was made to feel that something was wrong with me because I did not 'fit in.'"³⁸ Although one fan confessed that she was just as infatuated with the Beatles as her peers were, she insisted that she would treasure Rand's reply to her letter more than any other pop culture curio.

³³ Jerome Tuccille, *It Usually Begins with Ayn Rand* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 15.

³⁴ Laura Janson to AR, May 30, 1960, 038-04B, ARP.

³⁵ Ken Guilmartin to AR, Jan. 22, 1963, 046-19A, ARP.

³⁶ Mary M. Braungart and Richard G. Braungart, "The Life-Course Development of Left- and Right-Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s," *Political Psychology* 11, no. 2 (1990): 243-307; Sharon Presley, "Individualist Libertarians: A Psychological Study," *Libertarian Connection* 21 & 22 (July 30, Sept. 10, 1971): 2-4, 1-5.

³⁷ Karen Reedstrom, "Interview with Murray Franck," *Full Context*, June 1992, 3.

³⁸ Libby Parker to AR, June 30, 1963, 038-04D, ARP.

According to a 1963 study conducted by Edward Cain, the typical follower of Rand was one who “is very likely to picture himself as someone whom John Galt might call to his mountain retreat.”

Consistent with Rand’s depiction of the talented, bright, yet unrecognized outcast, Cain described the archetypal Randian student as someone who “feels there should be appropriate reward for a job well done, and has probably long despised the ‘second-handers,’ or drones, who have had to crib from his chemistry reports or term papers.”³⁹ Rand gave these marginalized youth what they saw as their long-overdue recognition.

The adoration which Rand was capable of eliciting from young people was not simply a passive by-product of her writings, but something which Rand herself actively cultivated. When asked about her followers, Rand’s notoriously placid exterior yielded to warm compassion: “I stand up for a specific system of philosophy. Young people would like life to make sense. Their need is enormous, and very tragic. These are the people who haven’t yet given up a desire to have a consistent view of life.”⁴⁰ It was her philosophy, she believed, which would serve as an antidote to this tragedy. One reason *The Fountainhead* possessed such enduring appeal, she wrote in 1968, was because it represented a “confirmation of the spirit of youth.”⁴¹ While some individuals in the face of the slightest challenge would sacrifice their vision of man’s glory and potential, a select few would cling to their youthful convictions, transcending the hypocrisy of their elders. While pop culture might revel in anti-heroic figures like Humphrey Bogart or Mr. Magoo, Rand presented characters who fulfilled youth’s every ideal, unencumbered by emotion, pain, or guilt and always committed to the vision with which they had begun their respective life journeys.⁴² Many students of Objectivism recalled how Rand’s stories of good and evil reverberated with their fondest childhood memories,

³⁹ Edward Cain, *They’d Rather be Right: Youth and the Conservative Movement* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1963), 48-49.

⁴⁰ Henry Lee, *American Weekly*, Jan. 14, 1963, 002-05C, ARP.

⁴¹ Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (New York: Plume, 1943), xiii.

⁴² Rand’s perception of young people’s worship of anti-heroes was reinforced by a study which appeared in *Newsweek*, “Campus ’65: The College Generation Looks at Itself and the World Around It” (March 22, 1965). The article stated that young people favored pop culture “losers” like Mr. Magoo, Big George, and Humphrey Bogart.

echoing the “nobility, intelligence, battles for the right” of heroes such as Daniel Boone and Kit Carson. One fan, who as a child had loved Edgar Rice Burroughs’ Tarzan tales, said, “All of [Rand’s] stories dealt with people who had goals and nothing could stop them.”⁴³

Many of Rand’s closest associates also remarked on how much Rand herself appeared to embody the same “spirit of youth” about which she wrote. This idealistic quality endeared her to the first generation of young Objectivists, the ironically named Collective whom Rand often referred to as her “children.”⁴⁴ Along with Nathaniel and Barbara Branden, the original inner circle consisted of a young Alan Greenspan, Joan Mitchell Blumenthal, Leonard Peikoff, and Robert Hessen. Sensing that Rand was on the same quest for a philosophy of life, the Collective constituted the first wave of youth to be won over by Rand’s incipient youthfulness. As Barbara Branden would describe many years later, “We would see the face of a forty-five-year-old woman become the face of a twenty-year-old girl within the space of ten minutes.”⁴⁵ Those private meetings of the Collective would set the pattern of youth responses to Rand throughout the sixties.

Rand’s message of uncompromising individualism fired the imaginations of young people in ways that were undeniably timeless in quality. However, just as Communism had captured the minds of youth during the thirties, the Randian phenomenon reached beyond the confines of psychological salve to also serve as a stirring political statement that uniquely appealed to right-wing youth during the sixties. Although that decade in many ways represented the zenith of what Howard Brick has called the “postcapitalist vision,” it was also for this very reason a pivotal point during which distinctly modern means were recruited in the service of unadulterated capitalism. Prying apart the fusion of social welfare and market processes, Rand called for the complete separation of both on the grounds, not of tradition, but of innovation. This stance was a blatant

⁴³ Karen Reedstrom, “Interview with Murray Franck,” *Full Context*, June 1992, 1.

⁴⁴ “No Walls Will Fall,” *Newsweek* (Oct. 14, 1957).

⁴⁵ B. Branden, 237.

challenge to the liberal consensus that had reigned supreme since the New Deal era, as experts and policymakers in Washington increasingly took for granted that government would intervene to soften the blows of economic cycles and to advance social welfare.

As liberalism struggled to regain its moorings after World War II, two key texts illustrated the mood that would come to dominate the decade: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Vital Center* and Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology*. As early as 1949, Schlesinger had urged Americans to aggressively and wholeheartedly commit themselves to forging a moderate center in politics that would help topple the Communist menace. By 1960, Bell would echo Schlesinger with his contention that non-pluralistic political dogmas had become "exhausted." Although Bell's work would be taken in unanticipated directions, it was notable for its proclamation that battles between great systems of thought were over and that general agreement had been reached on the need for a welfare state. At the heart of these liberal assumptions, in Rand's eyes, was a dangerous implication: political moderation in an age which desperately required absolute ethical principles and firm, uncompromising stances. The term "consensus" merely glossed over the fact that, in the name of the "common good," private interests were further undermining individual sovereignty. In truth, "society" was nothing more than the mere sum of its individuals, not an entity in itself.

Furthermore, Rand believed that the liberal consensus had translated into a pragmatist approach to politics, where in the words of James Reston of *The New York Times*, "Operations dominate purposes."⁴⁶ As she would state in her famous essay, "J.F.K: High Class Beatnik," the Kennedy administration epitomized the liberal obsession with "doing before thinking," grounding political leadership not on thought but on action, power-lust, and utility.⁴⁷ This trend was worsened even further under Lyndon Baines Johnson, whose approach Rand believed was contained in a single quote by Johnson's White House Assistant, Richard N. Goodwin: "We are not sure where we

⁴⁶ James Reston, "Washington: The Arrogance of Power," *The New York Times*, May 1966.

⁴⁷ Rand, "J.F.K – High Class Beatnik," *Human Events* 17, no. 35 (Sept. 1, 1960): 393-394.

are going. It is not the job of politicians to create brand-new ideas.”⁴⁸ In the messianic tone of a science fiction writer, Rand warned that this atmosphere of consensus hid something ominous which bordered on fascism: “There is no ideological trend today. There are no political principles, theories, ideals or philosophy.”⁴⁹ The paucity of ideas in the political sphere, in Rand’s estimation, was the key factor which allowed collectivistic evils to seep throughout the culture, as seen in the evasive tone of Johnson’s Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare referring to the “modern art of ‘how to reach a decision without really deciding.’”⁵⁰ In *Atlas Shrugged*, villain Jim Taggart echoed such sentiments as he and his Washington gang surreptitiously determine the fate of the nation under socialistic Directive No. 10-289: “We won’t have to decide. Nobody will be permitted to decide anything.”⁵¹ Perhaps it should come as no surprise that many young readers found *Atlas Shrugged* eerily prophetic.

Therefore, as the Left moved from “class” to “culture,” in Bell’s words, Rand advocated the opposite: an atomistic individualism in which one man’s needs would never encroach upon another man’s prerogatives. Allowing the state to cater to specific individuals would be an atavistic leap backwards from a “contract” to “status” society in which human initiative and effort were ignored, even punished.⁵² For youth, the oppressive liberal consensus encouraged the very situation which Rand so vividly depicted in *Atlas Shrugged* – one where mediocrity was enshrined, need became the determinant of possession, and hard workers were appropriated for the sake of the lazy. Such a message had personal meaning for youth who felt increasingly coerced into entering a life of public service. With Kennedy’s summons to “ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can

⁴⁸ Richard H. Rovere, untitled article, *The New Yorker*, Aug. 14, 1965.

⁴⁹ Rand, “The New Fascism: Rule by Consensus,” Part I, *The Objectivist Newsletter* 4, no. 5, May 1965.

⁵⁰ Fred M. Hechinger, “Gardner Says Indecision Perils Public and Private Leadership,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1965.

⁵¹ Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Plume, 1999), 543.

⁵² The distinction between “status” and “contract” was first made by British jurist and historian Sir Henry Maine. Status societies were akin to those which had existed under the feudal system. These were then replaced by societies in which relationships arose from contract, evidence that individual autonomy existed. Maine’s distinction greatly influenced theorists like William Graham Sumner and Herbert Spencer.

do for your country,” many youth sensed the pressure to participate in such goodwill efforts as the Peace Corps, something which Rand repeatedly denigrated as unnecessary self-sacrifice.⁵³

Yet another perceived effect of managerial liberalism was the extent to which it erased individuality and encouraged soulless conformity. On the Left, intellectuals like William Whyte had also lamented the so-called Social Ethic, in which man had become so embedded in The Organization that he had lost traditional American values like self-reliance and individual agency. Whyte’s streamlined description of modern America, brought to an utter extreme in Rand’s 1957 novel, illustrated fears over the encroachment of managerial liberalism upon traditional, middle-class prerogatives.⁵⁴ Both Rand and Whyte spoke to this anxiety and skepticism by invoking the nostalgic image of the autonomous, property-owning capitalist.

The parallel between these two figures is not merely academic, as Rand herself attended a symposium in Georgia to specifically discuss Whyte’s work. There, Rand asserted that “the miserable, little socialized, self-abnegating mediocrities described by Mr. Whyte” were concrete manifestations of the irrational and altruistic philosophies she so fervently opposed.⁵⁵ However, while Whyte had called for “individualism *within* organization life,” Rand demanded an entirely new conception of economic relations in which each man was a private actor, trading value for value, unaffected by government edicts issued from above.⁵⁶ In Rand’s world, individuals would be free to make their own decisions and to act as leaders of their own lives, rather than simply followers within a massive bureaucratic machine.

⁵³ One example of the “selfless citizen” was Thomas Scanlon of Dunmore, Pennsylvania, who came to be known as the “Peace Corpsman willing to walk 20 miles in the snow as [an] example for youths.” See Marjorie Hunter, “President Bids Students Drop Timeworn Political Arguments,” *The New York Times*, June 21, 1962.

⁵⁴ For a more extended discussion of this idea, see Andrew Hoberek, *The Twilight of the Middle Class: Post-World War II American Fiction and White-Collar Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁵⁵ Rand, “Modern Management” in *The Ayn Rand Column: Written for the Los Angeles Times* (New Milford, CT: Second Renaissance Books, 1998), 112.

⁵⁶ William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 11.

The liberal, altruistic code further reinforced its hold on the culture by infiltrating schools, which Rand felt was a key factor in destroying the potential of gifted students.⁵⁷ Branding professors “parasites of subsidized classrooms,” Rand was horrified by studies which reported that more and more students were “simply not aiming to be successful men and women in an achievement-oriented society; they want to be moral men in a moral society.”⁵⁸ For Rand, such a distinction was artificial, for to be “moral” was precisely to be driven to achieve. What many journalists were criticizing as the “intellectual devitalization” occurring across America’s campuses had much to do, in Rand’s opinion, with the poisonous influence of Deweyan pedagogy.⁵⁹ Dewey’s insistence that “individuality cannot be opposed to association” had turned students into mere automatons, intent not on fulfilling individual life goals, but on “adjustment” to an amorphous society. One fan from the University of Pittsburgh lamented, “How many times have I heard the following: Competition is bad and is to be discouraged, group work and cooperation via Russia is the ideal, watch out for children who are loners and do not adjust, etc. No hint is ever made that when children do not adjust perhaps it is the fault of the system or philosophy instead of the child!”⁶⁰ Rand’s own impressions were thus bolstered by stories such as these, which fans sent in regularly for her to collect in her so-called “Horror File.”

Additionally, as the decade progressed, it appeared that to fill the vacuum left by lowered educational standards were the omnipresent, leftist rebels protesting innumerable social causes. Slogans such as “Strike now, analyze later” proved to Rand that liberal youth were nothing but “headless bodies,” engaging in eccentric, countercultural behavior “for the mere sake of non-

⁵⁷ Rand’s condemnation of the nation’s educational state makes her part of a larger conservative critique of liberal educational practices. One example is Frederick Wilhelmsen, ed., *Seeds of Anarchy: A Study of Campus Revolution* (Dallas: Argus Academic Press, 1969). For the stances of other conservative intellectuals, see Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, 278-290.

⁵⁸ “Berkeley Professors Report Needed Changes,” *Time*, Aug. 1965; “A Good Man Is Best to Find,” *Time*, Jan. 4, 1963.

⁵⁹ William V. Shannon, “Thoughts on the Young,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 1972.

⁶⁰ Shirley Jean Mason to AR, Sept. 26, 1973, 022-05D, ARP.

conformity.”⁶¹ They were subjectivists who were capitulating to their emotions, whims, and impulses, ultimately acting profoundly *selfless* because they were unable to demonstrate more novel forms of self-assertion. Conservative youth in general came to abhor what were considered the Dionysian excesses of leftists who were thwarting their contractual right to receive an education. However, Randian youth in particular called for an Apollonian turn toward rationality and restraint, for protest of any kind, even if carried out by right-wing youth, was counterproductive. The campus revolts proved to be a key arena in which Rand’s followers could flex their intellectual muscles and demonstrate their interest in theory during a decade which appeared oriented only towards unthinking action.

Unsurprisingly, Rand’s sweeping critique of the New Left hindered her students’ abilities to consider possible areas of agreement with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). As James Miller has argued, the Port Huron Statement of the early sixties encapsulates the fresh, almost romanticized, vision of individual authenticity and intellectual rationality which initially brought SDS into being.⁶² But it was the cataclysmic events of the late sixties which would etch the deepest impressions on Rand and her followers, urging them to insist that reason remained solely on their side. In a key text entitled “The Cashing-In: The Student Rebellion,” Rand explained that liberal youth were the direct products of the pragmatic, positivist philosophies taught in universities. She encouraged students of Objectivism to show, through peaceful, reasoned means, that liberal protestors were not the primary “spokesmen for American youth.”⁶³ This essay would serve as a key weapon for many Objectivist youth in their intellectual arsenal against the New Left, despite the fact

⁶¹ Rand, “Check Your Premises: The Cashing-in: The Student ‘Rebellion,’” Part 2, *The Objectivist Newsletter* 4, no. 8 (Aug. 1965).

⁶² James Miller, *Democracy Is In The Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 13-18.

⁶³ Rand, “Check Your Premises: The Cashing-in: The Student ‘Rebellion,’” Part 3, *The Objectivist Newsletter* 4, no. 9 (Sept. 1965): 8.

that both sectors embraced uncannily similar ideas on utopianism, human potential, and individual reason.

By the late sixties, several students groups had formed to protest *against* the protestors, employing the quiet, restrained methods advised by Rand. Even at Columbia, well known for its leftist activism, the Committee for the Defense of Property Rights drew upon Objectivism to argue that “if the *principle* and precedent of coercion is once established, such groups as S.D.S. will have no difficulty in bringing our university, and our academic pursuits, to a grinding, terrorized, Berkeley-style halt.”⁶⁴ Led by law student Howard Hood, the Committee asserted that rather than using force to propagate ideas, it would employ education, reason, and persuasion. Similar student groups emerged elsewhere, such as the Committee against Student Terrorism (CAST) at Brooklyn College, which condemned the student rebels as “today’s version of the Nazi thugs who seized power in Germany in the 1930s.”⁶⁵

As much as Rand’s devotees agreed with her castigation of liberalism, however, they also insisted that they were not members of the conservative fold. Their ideals transcended party labels, representing something novel and pure in the history of the world: “radicals for capitalism.” The problem with conservatism, youth learned from Rand, was that it was “an embarrassing conglomeration of impotence, futility, inconsistency, and superficiality,” papering over fissures which simply could not be ignored.⁶⁶ Indeed, as George Nash has shown, conservatism had been steadily gaining intellectual force in the post-World War II era through an uneasy fusion of religious traditionalism and laissez-faire capitalism. The “new conservatism” of intellectuals such as Peter Viereck, Russell Kirk, and Richard Weaver emphasized a recovery of traditional religious and moral

⁶⁴ “Abolish SDS,” Pamphlet, The Committee for the Defense of Property Rights, Spring 1967, 005-18A, ARP. Hood would send Rand the literature of the Committee throughout 1967, and Rand more than once expressed her interest and hopes for its success.

⁶⁵ “Stop Student Storm Troopers,” Pamphlet, The Committee Against Student Terrorism, undated, 005-15A, ARP. Rand would also praise CAST in the June 1968 issue of *The Objectivist*.

⁶⁶ Rand, “Check Your Premises: Choose Your Issues,” *The Objectivist Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1962).

absolutes and a repudiation of the relativism which had corrupted Western values. On the other hand, the libertarianism associated with thinkers like Leonard Read, Frank Chodorov, Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises stressed the value of the individual and private property. While one side advocated modesty and human brotherhood, the other embraced self-assertiveness and self-reliance. Luckily, a strain of anti-communism advanced by former radicals like Whittaker Chambers and James Burnham provided the glue which would temporarily join these divergent impulses. Furthermore, with the aid of the influential Frank Meyer, the synthesis of these disparate strands of thought appeared increasingly practical and justified.⁶⁷

While Rand agreed with the anti-communist sentiments of conservatives, she did so not on grounds that communism was godless, but that it destroyed man's mind and therefore his capacity to produce freely. To defend capitalism on a religious basis was antithetical to reason; capitalism was rooted not in faith, but in a confidence in man's ability to use his mind in the service of human progress. Conservatives had essentially merged with liberalism on the need for a mixed economy, and in that sense both liberals and conservatives belonged to the "mysticism-altruism-collectivism axis" which was ultimately "anti-man, anti-mind, anti-life."⁶⁸ The "modern republicanism" of Dwight D. Eisenhower showed how much mixed premises like altruism and statism had saturated conservatives' world view. Conservatives continued to compromise on ideals, but students of Objectivism would remain purely intellectual. Even the leftist *New Leader* took note of the trend, stating that, "Objectivism, unlike most other past and present right-wing movements in this country, has more of an intellectual than an emotional appeal and is consequently attracting educated young people to its ranks."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 1996), 161-7.

⁶⁸ Rand, "Check Your Premises: Is Atlas Shrugging," *The Objectivist Newsletter* 3, no. 8 (Aug. 1964).

⁶⁹ N. Branden, "A Note to Our Readers," *The Objectivist Newsletter* 2, no. 12 (Dec. 1963): 4.

Leaping over other pressing issues of the day, particularly those pertaining to race, Rand argued that the overarching paradigm under which all other issues were subsumed was individualism versus collectivism. In order to become the “New Intellectuals” who would stem the tide of pragmatism and advance the “reason-individualism-capitalism axis,” youth needed to commit themselves to the life-long study of Objectivist principles. Rand and Branden would form an empire for just this purpose.

II MARKETING OBJECTIVISM

“Organizations are constantly sending out SOS’s to their supporters and subscribers, pleading for money, wailing that without charitable contributions they cannot survive. We are proud of the fact that we *can* – that there *is* an economic market for *our* ideas. If this sounds like a boast, it is. We have earned it.”
–Nathaniel Branden, Dec. 1963

With its emphasis on fundamental theories, Objectivism was focused first and foremost on cultivating an intellectual subculture in distinct opposition to existing political alternatives. Rand and Branden recognized that Objectivism constituted a veritable market among eager youth, even if their preferred methods of propagating the “right ideas” would rely on words, rather than actions. By Spring 1966, Michael Shaw of On-Campus Sales, an organization devoted to selling “college-oriented products and services with good profit potential,” reported to Branden that Objectivism was ready to be aggressively marketed on college campuses.⁷⁰ Shaw, a student of Objectivism himself, mustered all his organization’s resources to aid in extending Rand’s influence across college campuses. His organization agreed to distribute 2,000 posters and 40,000 circulars during 1967 advertising Rand’s ventures, as well as order cards enabling students to directly purchase Rand’s

⁷⁰ Michael A. Shaw to Nathaniel Branden, July 18, 1966, 24-05-04B, ARC.

fiction and non-fiction.⁷¹ In true capitalist fashion, Objectivism had by the late sixties replied to mushrooming demand by becoming a product of unparalleled value for right-wing college students.

But well before Shaw's active marketing campaign, Objectivism had built its reputation upon much more modest foundations. Beginning in March 1960, all news pertaining to Rand was printed by a low-cost, mimeographic service called *The Runge-Torigian Newsletter*. Serving as a calendar of events for students of Objectivism, *The Runge-Torigian Newsletter* would be a precursor to Rand's more popular, expanded journal of ideas, *The Objectivist Newsletter* (later re-named *The Objectivist*). In addition to flagging Rand's appearances on TV, radio, and college campuses, the newsletter focused on reporting Objectivism's successes as an intellectual movement. In its third issue, it proudly noted that, "*Atlas Shrugged* is required reading in many colleges and universities throughout the U.S.," serving as a textbook for a literature course at the University of Illinois and as required reading for a course on capitalism at Smith College.⁷²

Indeed, despite all her aversion to modern academia, Rand recognized that a key way to promote her teachings among young people would be through traditional educational channels. In March 1958, she delivered her first speech, "The Twentieth Century Revolt Against Reason," at Queens College, proclaiming that "all of you under the age of 25 are victims of a bankrupt intellectual tradition."⁷³ Pleased with her warm reception, Rand confessed to the school newspaper that she now "[wished] to address every college in the country." Thus, in February 1960, Rand spoke at Yale University on "Faith and Force: Destroyers of the Modern World." Rand grew even more convinced that by communicating directly to intellectually-starved but talented students, she would finally be able to return the discussion back to "principles, fundamentals and abstractions."⁷⁴ If she could reach youth at other colleges which, like Yale, were not wholly infected by "the rudeness of

⁷¹ Shaw to NB, Sept. 9, 1966, 24-05-04B, ARC.

⁷² *The Runge-Torigian Newsletter* 1, no. 3 (May 19, 1960): 120-05X, ARP.

⁷³ "Cult of Zero Worship," *The Rampart*, March 11, 1958, 50-08-26, ARC.

⁷⁴ Michael M. Uhlmann, "The Power of Personality," *Yale Daily News*, Feb. 19, 1960, 105-12D, ARP.

epistemological subjectivism,” she believed she might well make an impact on the culture. After Rand’s appearance at Yale, she was quickly inundated with requests from schools across the nation. When her busy schedule allowed, Rand would accept only the most prestigious engagements, but in letter after letter, students assured her that if she would only appear on campus, it would be the first, necessary step to filling “a much-felt cultural void.”⁷⁵

One of Rand’s appearances at Columbia in 1967 testified to the wide reach of her popularity. Two other speakers had also been scheduled during the same hour that Rand was to deliver her defense of capitalism. Both were recognized as prominent faculty members and former presidential advisors. However, one speaker, after finding himself with fewer than fifteen attendees rather than the expected 100, decided to re-schedule his talk and listen in on Rand’s instead. The other speaker, also dealing with poor turnout, admitted that he “clearly could not compete” with Rand and subsequently canceled his talk. Meanwhile, Rand faced a crowd of 400 people crammed into an auditorium meant to hold only 200.⁷⁶ The incident was made even more illustrative by the fact that the liberal Columbia had already established, in the spring of 1963, an hour-long radio program entitled, “Ayn Rand on Campus.”⁷⁷

In addition to her lectures on college campuses, Rand also reached youth by appearing regularly at the Ford Hall Forum in Boston. The *Boston Sunday Globe* took note of the phenomenon: “In today’s ‘engagé’ world – from Paris to Berkeley to Tokyo to Mexico City to Chicago and even (most recently) to Cape Town – is there *anywhere* an old, adult-run institution to which youth are flocking with their bodies, their membership dues, and their enthusiasms?”⁷⁸ The Ford Hall Forum had surprisingly become a meeting ground for both young and old, largely because of Rand. President Reuben L. Lurie testified that the crowds coming to visit Rand “grow larger and larger

⁷⁵ Michael A. Delizia to AR, Jan. 26, 1963, 046-19D, ARP.

⁷⁶ Robert Hessen to AR, April 3, 1967, 151-16C, ARP.

⁷⁷ “WKCR-FM: WKCR Program Schedule, King’s Crown Radio,” Pamphlet, Fall 1965, 105-13X, ARP.

⁷⁸ William Worthy, “Ford Hall Forum: Boston at Its Best,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, December 15, 1968, 7, 10, 12.

with ever increasing numbers unable to get in.”⁷⁹ Although not all attendees agreed with Rand’s controversial views, she undoubtedly could attract some of the hugest youth audiences at the height of her popularity during the sixties. Students who couldn’t secure her presence at their schools, or youth who simply wished to catch a glimpse of the illustrious novelist, would flock to Ford Hall to hear Rand’s heavy Russian accent expounding on the virtues of selfishness.

Rand’s influence on college campuses was further exemplified by the many students who sought to integrate Objectivism into their coursework, in fields ranging from literature to psychology to mathematics. The Spring 1964 issue of *The Yale Political*, a journal published quarterly by undergraduates, featured an article by Rand on the role of government in the economy.⁸⁰ On a more individual level, Rand’s ideas appeared in countless college assignments, from one student’s thesis on Henry James to another student’s speech on liberalism in America.⁸¹ In addition to undergraduate engagement with Rand’s ideas, graduate students intent on entering academia also sought to plant the seeds for a Randian revolution. Many of them had their start as Rand’s first generation of students in the Collective, such as Robert Hessen, who would teach at Columbia and Stanford. Finally, some professors less directly connected to Rand also recognized the relevancy of her ideas. A psychology instructor at the University of Michigan, for instance, used *The Fountainhead* as a key text in his class of 360 students.⁸² Objectivism was by no means completely rebuffed by the mandarins of high culture.

However, the vast majority of academics were dismayed by Rand’s influence on their most promising students. One professor at Yeshiva University was shocked when he found that twenty-five percent of his students wrote their term papers on *Atlas Shrugged*: “When I was a young man, the students who experimented with new ideas were attracted, predominantly, to socialism and

⁷⁹ Reuben L. Lurie to AR, Nov. 10, 1970, 046-20A, ARP.

⁸⁰ Guy Heinemann to Ayn Rand, May 23, 1964, 001-04A, ARP.

⁸¹ Thomas M. Bass to Ayn Rand, Feb. 6, 1962, 038-04D, ARP; Joel Schindall to AR, April 17, 1962, 151-16C, ARP.

⁸² Robert Rosman and Victor Wexler to AR, May 18, 1965, 104-8A, ARP.

communism. But Ayn Rand seems to be capturing young people with *anti*-altruist ideas.”⁸³ Many professors also reluctantly reported that they had been obligated to read *Atlas Shrugged* after students peppered them with questions on Objectivism. English professor Robert L. White captured the general fear among academics that even if young adults outgrew Rand’s ideas, her “poison is apt to linger in their systems – linger and fester there to malform them as citizens and, possibly, deliver them over willing victims to the new American totalitarians.”⁸⁴

But as much as professors like White would lament Rand’s popularity, none could deny her genuinely grassroots appeal. On colleges across the nation, countless Ayn Rand clubs and societies sprang up to serve as forums for debating Rand’s ideas. Stanford and Boston University had the highest concentrations of Objectivists, but they were also present at institutions like MIT, Harvard, and UC Berkeley.⁸⁵ Yet, rather than taking pride in the intellectual activity which Objectivism had generated, Rand and Branden both insisted that only NBI lecturers were “qualified spokesmen for Objectivism.” Throughout the years, as her popularity grew, Rand continued to set forth the same, predictably rigid statement of policy with regard to campus clubs: “It is our job is to tell people *what* Objectivism is, it is your job is to tell them *that* it is.”⁸⁶ One attempt at the University of Houston to offer a “free university” course on Objectivism drew Rand’s ire and a letter of warning by Rand’s lawyer, Henry Mark Holzer.⁸⁷ In Rand’s view, Objectivism involved a clear “division of labor,” with youth effectively serving as publicists but never as official representatives.

A much more acceptable model to follow was that of John Bales, whose efforts to spread Objectivism at Yale University elicited rare praise from Rand for his “intellectual initiative” and

⁸³ N. Branden, “A Report to Our Readers,” *The Objectivist Newsletter* 2, no. 12 (Dec. 1963): 4.

⁸⁴ Robert L. White, “Ayn Rand – Hipster on the Right,” *New University Thought*, August 1962, 65. Also quoted in Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 202.

⁸⁵ “A Survey of the Political and Religious Attitudes of American College Students,” *National Review*, October 8, 1963, special supplement.

⁸⁶ N. Branden, “A Message to Our Readers,” *The Objectivist Newsletter* 4, no. 4 (April 1965): 3-4; Rand, “A Letter from A Reader,” *The Objectivist* 5, no. 10 (Oct. 1966).

⁸⁷ “Letter from Our Attorney,” *The Objectivist* 6, no. 12 (December 1967).

“ingenuity of approach.”⁸⁸ Bales, treasurer of the Organization for Students of Objectivism, was interested in contributing alternative viewpoints to an upcoming forum on the topic “Campus in Ferment,” sponsored by *Challenge*, Yale’s undergraduate lecture committee. After extended haggling, the committee’s horrified chairman agreed to look over the pamphlet which Bales had brought with him, a copy of Rand’s “Cashing-In” article. A week later, Bales contacted the chairman who, with apparent enthusiasm, said that he had already notified the university bookstore to order copies of the pamphlets. In truth, the chairman never had any intention of following through. But Bales, anticipating such a reaction from the opposition, had already ordered 100 copies of the pamphlet with his own money. On the day of the colloquium, Bales erected a booth in front of the book store, emblazoned with the sign, “Read the Pamphlet That Was Too Challenging for *Challenge*.”⁸⁹ In the world of Randian youth, Bales exemplified how to successfully implement the Objectivist revolution, especially the proper method, place and occasion to fight it.

While youth clubs constituted an informal arena in which to propagate Objectivism, the official organ of Objectivism was the Nathaniel Branden Institute (NBI) which served to “fill the gaps the universities left unattended.”⁹⁰ Because infiltration of academia could only go so far and because America’s cultural state was so deeply bankrupt, NBI represented a parallel world of intellectual and social sustenance for right-wing youth. Working in tandem with *The Objectivist Newsletter*, NBI formed a tightly-choreographed, hierarchical world, separate from yet mimicking the universities in many ways. It worked out of its offices in the Empire State Building, an appropriate setting for an author who glorified all that was manmade, particularly sky-reaching architecture.

For Rand’s “New Intellectuals,” NBI constituted a parallel university, replete with its own curriculum, celebrity instructors, and social activities. The twenty-week “Basic Principles of

⁸⁸ Rand, “A Letter from a Reader,” *The Objectivist* 5, no. 10 (Oct. 1966). The statement of policy was reiterated in the June 1968 issue of *The Objectivist*.

⁸⁹ John W. Bales to NB, August 10, 1966, *The Objectivist* 5, no. 10 (Oct. 1966).

⁹⁰ Burns, 198.

Objectivism” course was the foundation of one’s Objectivist education, but it was assumed that only those “who are in agreement with the essentials of the philosophy” would attend in order to refine and enhance their understandings.⁹¹ Guests were sometimes allowed, but questioning was highly discouraged. Nathaniel would usually deliver the lectures, with Rand appearing at the end to answer questions. Away from New York, Objectivism was disseminated by tape transcription, a method which encouraged less conformity, even if great devotion to Rand still existed. Although the idea of taped lectures appeared strange, Nathaniel boasted at the end of 1963 that, “In an age when educators commonly complain about the apathy of those they teach, one can conclude a great deal – philosophically and culturally – from the sight of one hundred people sitting around *a tape recorder*, listening to a lecture on epistemology or ethics or esthetics.”⁹²

Furthermore, because Objectivism demanded total commitment in all aspects of one’s life, NBI also functioned as a central distribution source for social and aesthetic activities. Late in 1967, Branden announced the creation of a Social Activities Program that would offer dances and other kinds of informal entertainment for past and present NBI students.⁹³ Additionally, through the NBI Book service, students were presented with recommended music, predominantly of the Romantic style, as well as libertarian-leaning literature.⁹⁴ Other social activities included fashion shows, movie screenings, and piano concerts. Speaking of the popular NBI Ball, one student rated it “as one of history’s most efficient, cheapest, and psychotherapeutic aids.”⁹⁵ In a subculture where intellectuality was so highly prized, NBI established standards of art, leisure, and even dress to which

⁹¹ “Basic Principles of Objectivism: New York Series,” Nathaniel Branden Institute, Inc., undated, 117-5A, ARP.

⁹² N. Branden, “A Report To Our Readers,” *The Objectivist Newsletter* 2, no. 12 (Dec. 1963).

⁹³ “Letter to ‘Student of Objectivism’ from Nathaniel Branden,” Oct. 26, 1967, 117-05A, ARP.

⁹⁴ “Library of Romantic Music,” NBI Book Service, Inc., undated, 117-05B. Romantic composers such as Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Rachmaninoff were particularly favored by Rand and her students because they embodied the “proper sense of life.” Although a theory of Objectivist aesthetics was never fully articulated, Rand did make some headway in *The Romantic Manifesto* (1971), wherein she argued that Romanticism “projected an overwhelming sense of intellectual freedom,” as well as a “profound respect for man.”

⁹⁵ Harry Binswanger, *IREC Review* 1, no. 6 (Feb. 22, 1965): 5. Advertisements regarding Romantic Fashions event, Romantic Screen event, and Romantic Piano Concerts found in 117-05A, 117-06A, and 017-18D, ARP.

all students were expected to conform. Even the most recreational of choices was deemed fundamentally moral, a quality which attracted youth looking for a concrete cause to support. It was in this world that right-wing youth could catch a glimpse of an alternative world where rationality reigned. As Tuccille recalled, “One was surrounded by a veritable battalion of superior human beings, Galt-like in the no-nonsense jut of their jaws and the drilling determination issuing forth from eyes that never blinked.”⁹⁶ The popularity of this heady world was reflected in the growing membership as each year passed. NBI began with 12 students in 1957, but by 1960 it had already attracted 500. By the end of 1963, 3,000 students were enrolled, over 20,000 names appeared on NBI’s mailing list, and taped lecture courses were offered in more than 30 cities.⁹⁷

Self-consciously cerebral, students of Objectivism proudly flaunted their allegiance to Rand and their independence not only from liberal youth, but also from traditionalist conservatives. The ways in which they absorbed Rand’s teachings were through purely intellectual channels. At one NBI meeting in 1961, a young fan, tired of the incessant lecturing and philosophizing shouted out, “Talk, talk, talk. I’m sick of talk! What are your practical plans?” To which Rand retorted, “Plans? This is not a political action committee. This is a philosophical movement.”⁹⁸ Indeed, it was these stringent dynamics of interaction at NBI’s New York headquarters which became the source of the common criticism that Objectivism was a cult. Journalists eagerly caricatured Rand’s followers as prematurely serious, donning capes with dollar sign brooches, constantly smoking cigarettes, and utterly devoid of the capacity for humor or indulgence.

In many ways, these characterizations were true; Objectivism, operating on the premise that all facts were integrated, inherently required complete acceptance. One fan, intoxicated by

⁹⁶ Tuccille, 22.

⁹⁷ “A Message from the Author,” printed in 2nd Signet Edition of *Atlas Shrugged*, 17-06C, ARP; Yolanda Maurer, “‘Fountainhead’ Authoress Ayn Rand is Forceful, Controversial Woman,” *Fort Lauderdale News & Sun Sentinel*, Sept. 15, 1963.

⁹⁸ John Kobler, “The Curious Cult of Ayn Rand,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, Nov. 11, 1961.

Objectivism but still befuddled by its contradictions, wrote, “How much of what I am talking about is Howard McConnell and how much is simply a reflection of Ayn Rand?...Your philosophy has affected me to such a depth that I can no longer think outside of its context, nor can I picture myself in any other activity, save the discussion of it...I have found purpose – but at times it seems that it is purpose only to the extent of repetition.”⁹⁹ Accusations of Rand’s cult-like influence and the strangely religious devotion she elicited were therefore true for many youth, particularly in the early stages of their acquaintance with Objectivism.¹⁰⁰ The extent of agency which youth could practice in the world of Objectivism appeared severely limited by Rand’s overbearing personality, NBI’s stern regulations, and the unyielding nature of the philosophy itself. But young people, even Rand’s most loyal devotees, could never be boxed in so easily. For all their blustering efforts to transcend the masses, Objectivist youth were still tempted to enter the arena of group action. And in 1964, with the emergence of a charismatic, handsome Senator from Arizona, young Randites would temporarily suspend their unsullied allegiance to intellectual pursuits and jump head-long into the political fray.

III THE THRILL OF TREASON

“Goldwater is no Judge Narragansett, but one wonders: is Johnson an Ellsworth Toohey?”
–Harry Binswanger, *IREC Review* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 23, 1964)

When Barry Goldwater emerged on the national scene, observant youth could not help but feel that he had come straight out of Galt’s Gulch, one of Rand’s dashing, plucky heroes incarnate. With more than just satire, Tuccille recalled: “[Goldwater’s] jaw could have been chiseled by Rand herself. It was perfect. So strong and hard and it stuck out just the right amount...[and] the last

⁹⁹ Howard McConnell to AR, Jan. 7, 1957, 003-13B, ARP.

¹⁰⁰ One study of Rand’s intoxicating effect is Jeff Walker, *The Ayn Rand Cult* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Press, 1999).

name was perfection....It rippled, it shone, it glittered.”¹⁰¹ With his frontier-like ruggedness and down-home charm, Goldwater incited a veritable mania among right-wing youth. Not only did he manage to look the part, but he also promised something that no other candidate appeared to offer: solid principles which he would never compromise in the pragmatic world of Washington politics. As youth attempted to effect a rightward shift in the GOP, they turned to Goldwater as the man who represented “a choice, not an echo.”¹⁰²

Ever since the late 1950s, young people had worked assiduously to ensure that Goldwater would be the GOP nominee for the 1964 presidential campaign; by going against the prevailing tide of “me-tooism,” he foreshadowed “the America of the future in which we want to live,” recalled former YAF national chair Robert Schuchman.¹⁰³ Goldwater afforded a generation of young conservatives the opportunity to demonstrate to their elders that the GOP needed to turn away from the moderation of Taft-brand Republicanism and embrace older conservative principles.

When Goldwater’s *The Conscience of a Conservative* came out in 1960, many of the same young people who were so entranced by *Atlas Shrugged* found in Goldwater’s manifesto a concrete manifestation of Rand’s fictionalized world. Indeed, Goldwater and Rand drew upon the same libertarian audience, as subscriptions to *The Objectivist Newsletter* shot up from five thousand in 1963 to fifteen thousand merely a year later.¹⁰⁴ In stark contrast to the liberal, East Coast Republicanism of Nelson Rockefeller, here was a candidate who finally represented the possibility of a return to conservative values: strictly limited government; victory over, rather than coexistence with, Communism; and laissez-faire economics. As Robert Claus, president of Wisconsin’s Conservative

¹⁰¹ Tuccille, 39-40.

¹⁰² Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 72-73.

¹⁰³ Andrew, 198.

¹⁰⁴ Burns, 204.

Club divulged, “You walk around with your Goldwater button, and you feel the thrill of treason.”¹⁰⁵ In Sun Belt cities like Orange County, the Goldwater craze shook residents out of their apathy and brought them out into the streets in full force.¹⁰⁶ Campaign paraphernalia became a distinctive part of conservative youth culture, with Goldwater bumper stickers, buttons, aftershave, stamps, crayons, and cologne.

As early as 1960, to ensure that Goldwater would not let down her young fans, Rand had sent him a personal letter informing him of their plight. She told Goldwater that college students were apathetic, tired, and indifferent towards “any argument based on ‘faith,’” and that when they desperately asked her whom they could turn to for a rational politics, “Yours is the only name I give them.”¹⁰⁷ Although Goldwater carried the same fusionist opinions as William F. Buckley and L. Brent Bozell of *National Review*, Rand uncharacteristically assured her followers that inconsistency in a presidential candidate’s views was acceptable, if not ideal. Because it was never possible to achieve full consistency in politics, Rand argued, the next best thing for students of Objectivism to do would be to keep their own principles in mind and vote for the candidate that aligned closest with them. But Rand also added a special warning: “His battle can serve as an object lesson to those young people who declare, in effect, that ‘ideas and education are all very well, but we want action, political action.’ They can observe the problems of a political campaign without a firm ideological base.”¹⁰⁸ Even after the election was over, young people needed to continue focusing on “enlightenment, education, spreading the right principles”; for the time being, they were to serve as Goldwater’s “volunteer interpreters and clarifiers.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Andrew, 75-78.

¹⁰⁶ For a comprehensive yet concise study of the grassroots activism of Orange County middle-class residents, see Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁷ AR to Barry Goldwater, June 4, 1960, 043-05A, ARP.

¹⁰⁸ Rand, “Check Your Premises: How to Judge a Political Candidate,” *The Objectivist Newsletter* 3, no. 3 (March 1964): 1, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Marlene Podritske and Peter Schwartz, eds., *Objectively Speaking: Ayn Rand Interviewed* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), 20.

Serving as Rand's echo chamber, youth periodicals across the country recapitulated and amplified her message for all to hear. The *IREC Review*, a newsletter popular among students at Boston University, Harvard, and MIT, revealed its closeness to Rand in an issue devoted to the 1964 election; there were no illusions that Goldwater's election would mark the culmination of freedom and laissez-faire.¹¹⁰ Rather, political action in 1964 was essentially preventive: "Putting conservatives in office and passing conservative legislation is a matter of buying time."¹¹¹ Even if Goldwater continued to embrace religion, he was still a better alternative than the despised Johnson.

The greatest indication of Goldwater's popularity was the fact that he was able to act as a temporary unifier for right-wing youth of all stripes, for traditionalists who made up the bulk of YAF as well as the second largest grouping of Objectivists and libertarians. Although YAF had spent much of 1963 trying to marginalize the influence of perceived extremists within the movement, including Objectivists and John Birchers, Goldwater's nomination presented a chance to unite all strands of youth opinion toward common cause. A shared commitment to private property bound these two segments together, but as one Rand fan admitted, "Many Objectivist students joined YAF for the simple reason that they had no place else to go in order to engage in political activities, and there is no question that most of them joined with the explicit intention of transforming YAF into an Objectivist-oriented political institution."¹¹²

As early as August of that year, however, it had grown clear to all but the most confident enthusiasts that Goldwater would be crushed by the virtually undefeatable Johnson. Moderate Republicans like William Scranton, Dwight Eisenhower, Nelson Rockefeller and Richard Nixon had repeatedly attempted to tone down Goldwater's message, particularly after his infamous July acceptance speech in which he declared, "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no

¹¹⁰ The acronym *IREC* stood for Objectivism's four foundational values: Individualism, Reason, Egoism, Capitalism.

¹¹¹ Harry Binswanger, "Perspectives on the Presidential Election," *IREC Review* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 23, 1964): 2-4.

¹¹² Andrew, 62.

vice...moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.” Although Rand did not agree with charges that Goldwater was promoting extremism, her tone towards him gradually began to change. In the wake of Goldwater’s defeat, she informed *The New York Times* that she believed the campaign had been “conducted very badly” and that it was time for radicals for capitalism to “start from scratch, not in practical politics but in a cultural-philosophical movement to lay an intellectual foundation for future political movements.”¹¹³

As has already been recognized, the 1964 campaign, although failing to secure Goldwater for president, still proved to be a dress rehearsal for grassroots activists, helping to consolidate the forces of the growing conservative youth movement. In the aftermath of the Goldwater campaign, YAF benefited greatly from an influx of young people who were eager to remain politically connected and active.¹¹⁴ Listening closely to the counsels of their mentor William F. Buckley, politically-inclined conservatives were determined to prepare for future Novembers. Less recognized, however, is that Randian-influenced youth remained dissatisfied, rather than inspired, by Goldwater’s legacy. Although conservatives in general had always believed, in the words of Richard Weaver, that “ideas have consequences,” students of Objectivism were the most zealous in their conviction that ideas, more than structural factors, determined the course of history. Such an approach was not seen as a form of resignation or quietism because ideas possessed an active, even if largely symbolic, power to galvanize people.

Loyal students of Rand had never been truly satisfied with YAF, not only because of its fusionism but also because of its interest in political action. Proof had been seen in the days leading up to the 1964 Sharon Conference, when David Franke and Douglas Caddy issued an urgent

¹¹³ Murray Seeger, “Hope Still Found for Conservatism; Spokesmen Feel Goldwater was Diverted from Role,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1964.

¹¹⁴ Right-wing students within YAF were afforded rare tactical experience through the Youth for Goldwater committee, organized in May 1963. Their activities ranged from attending campaign rallies, to organizing mock conventions, to canvassing neighborhoods, to gathering crowds at airports before a Goldwater appearance. See Schneider, 74-75.

message: “Now is the time for Conservative youth to take action to make their full force and influence felt. By action we mean *political* action!”¹¹⁵ For Rand and her fans, such calls for entering the political arena were premature. Reflecting on Goldwater’s defeat, Rand’s followers viewed the manifestations of youthful enthusiasm, the countless rallies and demonstrations, as another form of pragmatism contaminating the political culture. Thus, as YAF used the lessons of the Goldwater campaign as a catalyst for entering the most activist period of its history, Randian-influenced youth turned away from more overt forms of protest.

Just as youth had echoed Rand when she backed Goldwater, they again reversed their stance. The *IREC Review*, which had so easily trumpeted Goldwater after Rand’s endorsement in *The Objectivist Newsletter*, quickly released an editorial calling political activists “headless horsemen.” Equating political activism with philosophical inactivism, *IREC Review* urged students to follow the advice of Rand and focus on re-defining key words in the American lexicon, such as “capitalism,” “freedom,” “extremism,” and “right-wing.” Editor Harry Binswanger counseled his peers: “Students of Objectivism seeking to achieve a free society should work at spreading all of Objectivism, especially the metaphysics and epistemology; the politics cannot stand alone.”¹¹⁶

Nearly a year and half after the Goldwater defeat, the *IREC Review* was still anxiously releasing articles to ensure that students were maintaining the right track as set out by their mentor. In one, they detailed the characteristics of the “pseudo-Objectivist” who claimed he was an Objectivist without taking the proper time, effort, and commitment to fully study what it meant to be one: “Lacking knowledge of existing theory and unable to create new theories, he tries to believe that theory is not needed, and struggles to fill in the gaps with ‘practical’ projects.”¹¹⁷ A true student of Objectivism was someone who recognized that reality presented only “black-or-white”

¹¹⁵ Andrew, 55.

¹¹⁶ Harry Binswanger, “Perspectives on the Presidential Election,” *IREC Review* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 23, 1964): 2-4.

¹¹⁷ Robert Masters, “The Mind of the Pseudo-Objectivist,” *IREC Review* 2, no. 3 (March 1966): 1-6.

alternatives and who spent his every waking moment reaching for a “full, detailed understanding of the proof of every principle.”

Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the Goldwater campaign, right-wing youth splintered off into various directions depending on their perceptions of what exactly 1964 had meant in the history of conservatism. Some libertarians did linger in YAF simply because this was the only group to turn to for political nourishment. But for those students of Objectivism who still remained very much under Rand’s spell, the Goldwater campaign signaled not the start of renewed political activity, but a turning inwards, a focus on building the intellectual foundations needed to permeate the culture.

IV **LIFE, LIBERTY, PROPERTY: *Persuasion* and the Draft**

“There never has been a truly ‘capitalist’ army, just as there never has been a totally capitalist economic or political system – and for the same reasons.”

–David Dawson, *Persuasion* 3, no. 11 (Nov. 1966)

As the most devoted of Rand’s followers fell away from Youth for Goldwater, they began directing their efforts towards less blatant forms of protest, forming discussion clubs and writing periodicals. One of the most influential of these youth publications was *Views, Reviews, and Persuasion* (later, just *Persuasion*), edited by Rand’s former student and the future libertarian feminist, Joan Kennedy Taylor. Taylor was part of New York’s Metropolitan Young Republican Club, which was established during the Goldwater campaign to function as “an Objectivist cell within the Young Republicans.”¹¹⁸ *Persuasion* initially served as the Club’s official newsletter and it clearly demonstrated the influence of Rand, who believed that young, professional intellectuals needed to serve as the “field agents” of the head philosopher “who defines the fundamental ideas of a culture.” Youth were to play a special role in clarifying, relaying, and transmitting the goals and values of

¹¹⁸ Karen Reedstrom, “Interview with Joan Kennedy Taylor,” *Full Context*, October 1993, 4.

politicians, which had been determined first and foremost by philosophers.¹¹⁹ *Persuasion* captured the typical response among students of Objectivism, proclaiming that an intellectual and cultural revolution needed to be implemented prior to any impulses to engage in political action.

Persuasion is one example of how youth attempted to navigate the tension between theory and politics by placing politics within an Objectivist framework and using words as their weapons of attack. But as the decade progressed, it would become increasingly clear that separating words from actions was a hazy endeavor, that very often words could intermingle and coexist with political protest or even become forms of protest themselves. Rather than drawing a clear line between culture and politics, arguing that culture determined and culminated in politics, right-wing youth would show the interpenetration of culture and politics. And the key issue which would emerge to reveal this linkage had wide reverberations for all youth: the draft.

From the beginning, Taylor and her associates struggled to decide what they would call their periodical. Although they were students of Objectivism, their publication would not deal with philosophy, but with politics. Years later, Taylor explained that after soliciting her mentor's advice, Rand "explained to me that the name for her political philosophy, considered by itself, was libertarianism, and [she] suggested that *Persuasion* should call itself a libertarian publication."¹²⁰ Thus, unable to call themselves Objectivist and unwilling to be labeled Republican, *Persuasion* would take the first step towards political engagement by identifying themselves with the libertarian tradition.

Although Rand repeatedly tried to distance herself from political labels, *Persuasion* was the only student periodical which surprisingly garnered her cautious endorsement in the December 1965 issue of *The Objectivist Newsletter*. She acknowledged that it was political in content, but she praised it

¹¹⁹ James McConnell, Interview with Ayn Rand, "For the Intellectual," University of Michigan Television, 1961; Podritske and Schwartz, 180.

¹²⁰ Jeff Riggensbach, "Joan Kennedy Taylor," *Ludwig von Mises Institute*, Jan. 14, 2011. Web. Feb. 2, 2011. <<http://mises.org/daily/4977>>.

for its “intellectual approach to concrete political problems.”¹²¹ Partly because *Persuasion*’s discussion of politics was so similar in format to Rand’s own newsletter, Rand wrote, “It does a remarkable educational job in tying current political issues to wider principles, evaluating specific events in a rational frame-of-reference, and maintaining a high degree of consistency.” Rand further recommended it to young people “who are eager to fight on the level of practical politics, but flounder hopelessly for lack of proper material.” Half of *Persuasion*’s subscribers would come from this rare endorsement.¹²²

With the publication of its very first issue on September 10, 1964, the magazine ardently encouraged youth to “stop the drift to fascism” by voting Goldwater. Yet, several months later *Persuasion* would abruptly shift its stance and lament that Goldwater had failed to defend specific political principles: “Mr. Goldwater relied on a single word to sum up his case before he presented it. The word was, ‘Conservative,’ and it couldn’t do the job. No word could, but this particular one has come to connote a belief, not an intellectual position.”¹²³ The Goldwater campaign had demonstrated to students of Objectivism how much rationality needed to be restored to politics; politicians needed to recognize voters as rational beings, coming to decisions after sufficient information was presented to them in a straightforward manner. Goldwater had ultimately shown the opposite, with his “scattershot method of presenting fragments of arguments, irrelevancies, and unsupported conclusions.”¹²⁴ His slogan had been “In your heart you know he’s right,” but Rand reminded youth that this was precisely the problem, that men’s minds could only be won by reason, not by appeals to intuition or emotion.

In the last issue of 1964, *Persuasion* counseled students to adopt a new course, a course which Rand herself had emphasized again and again – “the course of ideas.” The American people needed

¹²¹ Rand, “A Recommendation,” *The Objectivist Newsletter* 4, no. 12 (Dec. 1965): 8.

¹²² Karen Reedstrom, “An Interview with Joan Kennedy Taylor,” *Full Context*, October 1993, 4.

¹²³ Joan Kennedy Taylor, “Who’s Right?,” *Persuasion* 2, no. 2 (Feb. 1965): 1-5.

¹²⁴ Avis Brick, “The Making of a Loser,” *Persuasion* 2, no. 5 (May 1965): 8-12.

to be radically “re-educated in political philosophy,” meaning that they would learn an authentic, rights-based defense of capitalism and freedom. In a book review of Philip M. Crane’s *The Democrat’s Dilemma*, *Persuasion* noted how the Fabian socialists had become so successful in England: through permeation rather than revolution. Ironically praising the methods of their intellectual foes, *Persuasion* reminded students of Objectivism that an effective blueprint for political revolution “starts with the basement, not the fifth floor...with a philosophy, not with methods of indoctrination.”¹²⁵

Yet for all *Persuasion*’s desire to remain purely intellectual, untouched by emotion or pragmatism, it still remained a *political* periodical. While Rand had eschewed the co-optation of her work for political causes and repeatedly insisted that youth learn to think and speak in terms of abstractions, she herself had encouraged the politicization of Objectivism. The very fact that she had chosen to present Objectivism to the world in fictional form called attention to the tension in her philosophy between the abstract and the concrete, the intellectual and the emotional. This tension was further reinforced by Rand’s later forays into non-fiction, specifically with *The Objectivist Newsletter*, which explicitly and fervently entered heated political debates. Rand’s methods of communication did remain primarily intellectual in nature, but by igniting discussion and by challenging such fundamental beliefs, she inadvertently encouraged in youth a subcurrent of dissatisfaction with “mere talk” and a desire to do something more than just remain above the fray, detachedly commenting on current events. Rand had initiated the shift in the debate, but youth would now take the lead in moving still further away from metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics into the realm of politics.

The spark which ignited *Persuasion*’s battle was provided by a man named David Dawson, president of New York City’s Metropolitan Young Republican Club and an avid Rand fan. Echoing the approach of other approved youth ventures like The Committee for the Defense of Property

¹²⁵ Lois Roberts, “Review of *The Democrat’s Dilemma* by Philip M. Crane, Asst. Professor at Bradley University (Regnery, 1964),” *Persuasion* 1, no. 5 (Dec. 1, 1964): 3-6.

Rights, Dawson used Objectivism as an overarching structure, applying its principles to a specific national issue. In a series of articles throughout 1966 and 1967, Dawson articulated *Persuasion's* stance on the draft, seizing upon Objectivist tenets to demonstrate the injustice of making young men sacrifice their lives to the state. His central point-of-reference was one of Rand's speeches before Ford Hall Forum entitled, "The Wreckage of the Consensus," a searing indictment of the Vietnam War in general and the draft in particular.

This speech provided the central ideas which *Persuasion* would elaborate upon in its own, youth-oriented forum. The first argument that Rand made was that the draft exemplified the worst consequences of the state violating individual rights to life; it was yet another product, like the student protests, of the premises underlying a mixed economy. It was impossible to assert that young men had a moral obligation to the state, to lose their lives for the sake of a purposeless war, on the grounds that the state conferred obligations upon its citizens. Individuals inherently possessed rights, without any corresponding duties to their fellow men. Furthermore, Rand criticized the draft for destroying young men's confidence in their intellects, for robbing them of the chance to define their moral convictions during the "crucial, formative years" of their lives:

...it is these years that an allegedly humanitarian society forces him to spend in terror – the terror of knowing that he can plan nothing and count on nothing, that any road he takes can be blocked at any moment by an unpredictable power, that, barring his vision of the future, there stands the gray shape of the barracks, and, perhaps, beyond it, death for some unknown reason in some alien jungle.¹²⁶

Young men, sensing their impotence in the face of reality, abandoned their aspirations in order to become mere automatons for the state. Finally, Rand's ultimate criticism was that the draft was truly instituted not to serve the "national interest," but to enshrine the altruist principle that men needed to be sacrificed merely "for the sake of sacrifice." Deprived of the ability to become "productive, ambitious, and independent," young men further imbibed and reflected the altruist mentality of the modern welfare state.

¹²⁶ Rand, "The Wreckage of the Consensus," *The Objectivist* 6, no. 5 (May 1967): 3.

Rand's positive program for change encompassed the formation of a highly-trained, volunteer army which would inhibit political leaders' impulses to charge into war on any whim. But more importantly, she highlighted the need to arm people ideologically to fight political battles, something which she said Goldwater could have done, but which he had failed to amidst the pragmatic calculations of the 1964 election. Once again, Rand insisted that the job of fighting the draft belonged not to politicians but to intellectuals; compromise on this issue was impossible, and only intellectuals could effect the needed revolution, presenting coherent, clear, and consistent principles supporting man's right to his own life.

In his collection of *Persuasion* articles, Dawson followed a similar line of reasoning as Rand, but more explicitly concretized his argument into three major areas: life, liberty, and property. By shifting the debate from the realm of abstractions to the arena of libertarian ideology, Dawson was enabling his readers to enter a kind of political halfway-house that would prime them for future action. Youth were predictably urged to oppose the draft on the grounds that it robbed young men of their lives, putting them at the service of the group; depriving them of the liberty to think and act freely, based on their own volition; and denying them not only the products of their labor, but also their most fundamental form of property, their bodies. By enshrining the atavistic principle that "service to the values of the group are fundamentally prior to service to the values of oneself," the draft epitomized the worst aspects of the collectivistic effects of statism.¹²⁷ Echoing Rand, Dawson argued that man is rational enough to know when he must fight, especially when weighty issues of real defense are at stake, but the draft insulted man's intelligence, forcing him to twist his life into a false mold in order to "conform to official state morality." It created a class of privileged citizens who were relieved of the obligations imposed upon those who might not have the benefit of college deferments. Furthermore, it treated man's labor not as his own property, but as a natural resource

¹²⁷ David Dawson, "Posse Comitatus," *Persuasion* 3, no. 4 (April 1966): 2-3.

to be exploited for the so-called “common good” or “national interest.”¹²⁸ Labor was inseparable from the individual, but the state merely obscured this distinction between actor and action, treating man as a tool to be used at the service of the hazy concept of “society.”

Dawson’s tone throughout these articles was angry, ominous, and urgent, prompting hundreds of readers to send in letters asking editors what they should do to oppose the draft in their own personal lives. But *Persuasion*’s ideological opposition to the draft did not translate into support for civil disobedience or futile martyrdom. Responding to their readers’ frenzied inquiries, *Persuasion* echoed Rand’s emphasis on arguing theory without compromise: “One does not stop the juggernaut by throwing oneself in front of it,” but rather through smaller-scale efforts to slowly chip away at accepted social mores. *Persuasion*’s editors emphatically reminded youth that, reflecting the name of their publication, “We stand for the power of reason” and that they sought to change politics and culture “only by presenting and defending ideas.”¹²⁹

Yet for all its insistence on reason and restraint, *Persuasion* shared in the general struggle among youth to differentiate between what exactly encompassed the political and the personal. In the increasingly politicized atmosphere of the late sixties, *Persuasion* grappled with this tension even more overtly. In the words of sociologist Rebecca Klatch, “the totality of politics” demanded that youth, even those who most consistently and intransigently urged a kind of armchair intellectualism, to enter the field of action, compromise, and political pragmatism.¹³⁰ Furthermore, with its wide circulation in all states except Hawaii and with the assistance of Rand’s own newsletter, *Persuasion* ensured that its young audience would take note of its increasingly politicized approach to the draft.

¹²⁸ Dawson, “The Draft, Part V – Who Shall Serve?” *Persuasion* 4, no. 1 (Jan. 1967); Dawson, “The Draft, Part VI: Privileges and Obligations,” *Persuasion* 4, no. 3 (March 1967); Dawson, “The Draft, Part III – Labor as Property vs. Labor as Natural Resource,” *Persuasion* 3, no. 10 (Oct. 1966).

¹²⁹ “Editorial: A Word to Our Readers,” *Persuasion* 4, no. 4 (April 1967): 22-26.

¹³⁰ Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, The New Right, and The 1960s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 202.

In the very same month that *Persuasion* issued the advice to remain outside of politics, it was also arranging for the National Conference on Forced Service in Washington, D.C. In a revealing letter to Nathaniel Branden, Dawson urged Rand to attend, but he clearly acknowledged that “at least in some respects she wishes to *disengage herself from the political.*” Dawson envisioned that the conference would be “academic in tone,” serving as a gathering ground for prominent, Objectivism-friendly thinkers like Leonard Peikoff and Martin Anderson. However, he also revealed to Branden his deeper purpose in holding the conference: to alert the Republican Party that “it has a new minority in its midst.” Throughout the sixties, students of Objectivism had denounced Republicans and conservatism in general, insisting that “radicals for capitalism” would not compromise with existing political parties but serve merely as an external force seeking to change the culture wholesale. Yet, in a dramatic shift from this stance, Dawson revealed to Branden that youth were attempting not only to serve as independent “shock troops” for the revolution, transferring new ideas from Rand to the general population, but also as infiltrators into the preexisting Republican Party, using the draft as their means of entry: “We have just as much right to be a minority as the Moderates, the Conservatives, the Middle-of-the-Roaders or the Mainstreams.”¹³¹

Traditionalist conservatives in organizations like YAF had already demonstrated that they were grassroots activists, working within the Republican Party in order to effect change. But Rand’s students, who had always emphasized philosophy first and electoral concerns second, now appeared increasingly tempted to adopt the same course as other young conservatives. Just as mainstream conservatism had undergone a period of intellectual incubation in the immediate post-World War II period before moving on to political action, students of Objectivism were also beginning to distance themselves from the forum of mere ideas. And as they entered a more activist stage of their

¹³¹ Dawson to NB, Jan. 17, 1967, 005-18B, ARP.

development, students were given even more impetus by an entirely unforeseen event that would tear apart the official Objectivist empire, as well as speed up *Persuasion's* own demise.

V LIBERTARIANS RISING

“I disapprove of, disagree with and have no connection with, the latest aberration of some conservatives, the so-called ‘hippies of the right,’ who attempt to snare the young or more careless ones of my readers by claiming simultaneously to be followers of my philosophy and advocates of anarchism...If such hippies hope to make me their Marcuse, it will not work.”

—Ayn Rand, *The Objectivist* (Sept. 1971)

On a balmy September evening in 1968, a young man named Robert Cassella, along with several of his friends, gathered about a tape recorder to hear Barbara Branden’s voice expound upon the principles of efficient thinking. When the three-hour lecture came to a close, however, Cassella’s comfortable routine was interrupted. Cassella suddenly learned that Barbara, uncharacteristically, could not be present for that night’s question-answer period. “She will answer your questions at a later date, *if possible*,” Cassella was told by an intermediary. The words were puzzling and rather ominous, but Cassella asked nothing more and returned home.

Several days later, Cassella was again jolted by the news that NBI’s Friday movie night was cancelled. This was an even greater disappointment, for he’d been particularly excited to watch *Casablanca* and to mine it for nuggets of Objectivist gold. As he was about to leave the Empire State Building, he noticed a group of people milling about the NBI Representative. Listening in on the frenzied conversation, Cassella learned that Saturday’s social gathering had also been called off. It was then that Cassella’s disappointment grew into concern: “Something was wrong. Someone must be sick...Rand’s dead!” For the next few hours, Cassella and several others loafed around a nearby café, waiting to see if another student, Dianta Tucker, could find out exactly why their week’s activities had been so unceremoniously discarded. Cassella was already on his fifth cup of coffee when Dianta returned with the horrifying news that Rand and Nathaniel had had a fight and that the

Institute was permanently closed. “I froze. My eyes stared into space. I could hear Dianta speaking but her words were like empty pockets of air floating about me.”¹³²

Cassella’s experience of the infamous Rand-Branden split of 1968 was replayed in various approximate versions for many other students of Objectivism. The schism came as a shock, akin to a divorce between parents, leaving young followers struggling to decide whose side they were on – Rand’s or the Brandens’. NBI’s close-knit community was torn asunder, with friendships terminated between Rand’s unfailing loyalists and those who, citing Objectivist principles, refused to take sides until further evidence was presented. *Persuasion* itself dismantled in the same month that Rand and Branden announced their fallout.¹³³ Students were given few reasons for the split; Rand merely wrote in the May 1968 issue of *The Objectivist* that Nathaniel had, over the past three years, demonstrated a “gradual departure from the principles of Objectivism, a tendency toward non-intellectual concerns, a lessening of interest in philosophical issues and in the Objectivist movement as such.”¹³⁴ All that Rand could advise to her readers was that this tragedy could serve as a lesson in the demands of Objectivism: Branden had had so much “potential to become a great man,” but he had taken this for granted instead of remembering that “the act of focusing one’s mind and of facing reality remains an act of volition, to be performed anew in every hour and issue of one’s life.”¹³⁵ Soon, the Brandens issued their own reply, with Nathaniel hinting at the failed love affair he’d been carrying on with Rand. Whatever the intricacies of the unlikely scandal, no one could deny that Nathaniel’s attempts to transform Objectivism into a bona fide movement were now destroyed; NBI closed its doors and young Randites were left free to roam across the fields which Objectivism had so sedulously sown.

¹³² Robert Cassella, “Objectivism Revisited: Five Years Later – Part One,” *New Libertarian Notes* 2, no. 27 (Nov. 1973), Lawrence Samuels Collection, Folder 11-1, Magazines – New Libertarian Notes, 6.

¹³³ Although it is not clear if these two events are linked, it is noteworthy that in the final issue of *Persuasion*, the editors stated that they were developing other professional interests and moving on to their own separate, political careers. See “A Farewell to Our Readers,” *Persuasion* 5, no. 5 (May 1968): 21-22.

¹³⁴ Rand, “To Whom it May Concern,” *The Objectivist* 7, no. 5 (May 1968): 1.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

Although many a student had confessed to shedding tears over the 1968 schism, the scandal proved to be a hidden blessing for youth as they steadily entered adulthood. *Atlas Shrugged* had served as a veritable rite-of-passage into right-wing thought for numerous young fans, but now, partially freed from NBP's harsh dictates, they could turn their concerns outward into political projects which Rand had inspired but which she neither endorsed nor controlled. As has already been recognized elsewhere, Rand was a central catalyst for the burgeoning libertarian movement which would reach full force during the 1970s. Despite Rand's disapprobation, it was clear that Objectivism served as a way-station to political libertarianism. Myriad other thinkers also figured into the equation, such as Benjamin Tucker, Lysander Spooner, Albert Jay Nock, Frank Chodorov, H.L. Mencken, and even Thomas Jefferson and John Locke.¹³⁶ But for young people who had come of age during the sixties, Rand was a contemporary and essential element of their libertarian educations. David Nolan, reflecting on libertarianism's history, suggested several possible "starting dates" for the movement: 1957, the year *Atlas Shrugged* was published; 1962, the year that *The Objectivist Newsletter* was first issued; or 1964, the year of Goldwater's infamous campaign.¹³⁷ Whichever of these early milestones is stressed, however, they were all efforts at "ground tilling," and subsequent harvests of the "libertarian crop" would only come during the late sixties and early seventies. Objectivism served as the necessary seedling which would soon blossom into more concrete political expressions, outgrowing even Rand's own expectations.

Anarchist Roy Childs once wrote that "trying to sort out [Rand's] impact on the [libertarian] movement is rather like trying to sort out how Christianity transformed Western civilization," and

¹³⁶ For a discussion of the early libertarian tradition, see Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freenheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 21-111.

¹³⁷ David F. Nolan, "Present at the Creation," *New Libertarian Notes* 36, no. 11 (Nov. 1974): Box 1, David Walter Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

such an examination is beyond the scope of this thesis.¹³⁸ However, on the most basic level, Rand contributed to a distinctive strand of youth culture, with such Randian-inspired symbols as the black flag of anarchy bearing a gold dollar sign; long, flowing capes; the ever-present cigarette. More substantively, however, Rand ensured that libertarian youth would remain anchored to the right end of the political spectrum, despite the efforts of other libertarian thinkers such as Murray Rothbard, a self-proclaimed “right-wing liberal,” to effect a Left-Right alliance.¹³⁹ Rand’s philosophy gave young libertarians group cohesion without demanding that they surrender individual identity. Furthermore, Randian catchphrases such as “package deal,” “sense of life,” and “moral cannibalism” all became part of the common parlance of libertarian youth, giving them the means to articulate their dissent.

In a more subtle way, Rand infused libertarian-leaning youth with a profound respect for the centrality of ideas as guides to human action. Ironically, her desire for complete control over Objectivism tempted less star-struck youth to inch towards more politicized interpretations of Rand’s work. In this sense, youth demonstrated their inherent capacity not only to absorb the dictates of their elders, but also to reshape them to meet specific, subcultural needs. By acknowledging that social change could develop in tandem with or even follow politics, rather than vice-versa, students of Objectivism were departing from strict Randian principles. Indeed, for young people who looked to her fictional heroes as ideal types, theory and action needed to be combined *now* rather than *after* the attainment of wholesale cultural change. This would explain the increasing appearance of articles such as one in *The Fire Bringer*, which praised John Hospers’ book *Libertarianism* as “the practical Atlas Shrugged.”¹⁴⁰ Another article in *Protos*, a magazine which brought libertarianism to the youth scene in Southern California, acknowledged that libertarianism

¹³⁸ Roy A. Childs, Jr., Review of Barbara Branden’s *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (undated), Box 31, Roy A. Childs Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

¹³⁹ Murray N. Rothbard, “Confessions of a Right-Wing Liberal,” *Ramparts* 6, no. 11 (June 15, 1968): 47-52; Burns, 254-260.

¹⁴⁰ David Borg, “The Practical Atlas Shrugged,” *The Fire Bringer* 1, no. 4 (June 1972): Box 19, David Walter Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

was committed to “inviolable individualism” and “voluntarism,” two values which had been advocated so strongly by Rand. However, it also stressed a third value, “passion for justice,” which the author defined as an unwavering commitment to revolutionary action.¹⁴¹

The Fire Bringer and *Protos* demonstrated that the early libertarian movement was in many ways centered around magazines, periodicals and other mimeographed pamphlets created by college students.¹⁴² But these publications, like *Persuasion*, were increasingly showing that the separation of theory and practice was bursting at the seams. With the Objectivist schism of 1968, along with the general turbulence of that year as a whole, politically-inclined libertarians were increasingly compelled to forge a national student movement that would work *within* the electoral arena rather than outside it. The implicit goal was to speed up the course of the revolution by uniting ideas and actions into one coherent, political offensive. Many libertarians had already been working through mainstream conservative channels like YAF, Young Republicans, the John Birch Society, and the Liberty Amendment Committee. Now, facing an escalation of war in Vietnam and increasingly dissatisfied with YAF’s anti-communist focus, dissident right-wingers would draw upon Objectivist principles to clarify their own political platform.

As has been widely documented elsewhere, the most visible break would come in 1969 at the annual YAF convention in St. Louis, Missouri. It was here, with libertarians burning their draft cards and traditionalists chanting “Kill the commies,” that the uneasy marriage so central to the conservative coalition would finally be wrenched apart. The discourse on draft opposition to which *Persuasion* had so openly contributed now emerged as the central cause of the rift. Freed from YAF’s control, student libertarians immediately formed the Society for Individual Liberty (SIL) by merging

¹⁴¹ Walter E. Grinder, “What Is A Libertarian?,” *Protos* 1, no. 2 (Dec. 1969): Newspapers, Box 12, Lawrence Samuels Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

¹⁴² Burns, 258.

the Libertarian Caucus (L.C.) and the Society for Rational Individualism (SRI).¹⁴³ Previously, SRI, headed by former NBI student Jarrett Wollstein, had professed its “basic agreement with Objectivism” and its primary interest in educational initiatives. On the other hand, the L.C.’s participants had been much more “accustomed to deeds.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, the emergence of SIL signaled the growing recognition that even if students might “prefer to stress education and personal liberation,” they were also willing to “work with those whose values or life styles may be different from those of other libertarians.”¹⁴⁵ By merging thought and action, students of Objectivism were demonstrating one of the first attempts to create a libertarian youth movement not only with Rand’s respect for ideas, but also with organizational and tactical advantages.

The potential confusion resulting from this eclectic mixture was demonstrated in an article appearing in *Western World Review Newsletter*, which simultaneously used the words “non-political” and “a-political” to characterize the entire libertarian movement.¹⁴⁶ In actuality, the new politics demonstrated a contradiction which reached to the very core of Objectivism, a philosophy which ironically denied that contradictions could exist. Libertarianism and anarchism professed to be a-political, opposed to the routine functioning of Washington politics but still willing to work within the political domain. This somewhat paradoxical stance would later plague the Libertarian Party, which was formed in 1972. On the other hand, Objectivism was *both* a-political and non-political, opposed to politics qua politics and unwilling to compromise on fundamental principles by succumbing to partisan causes. The ease with which contemporary observers, even libertarians, anarchists, and Objectivists themselves, could confuse the two was rooted in the fact that youth

¹⁴³ Frank Mintz, “Libertarians and YAF,” *The Rational Individualist* 1, no. 11 (Sept. 1969): Box 1, David Walter Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Schoenwald, “No War, No Welfare, and No Damn Taxation: The Student Libertarian Movement, 1968-1972,” in *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums*, ed. Marc Jason Gilbert (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 37.

¹⁴⁵ Society for Individual Liberty, “Declaration of Principles,” *Integrity* 4, no. 11 (Nov. 1971): 5-7.

¹⁴⁶ *Western World Review Newsletter*, no. 2 (Oct. 1969): 3, Box 18, David Walter Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

were trying to find a middle-ground between Objectivist theory and its political correlate. SIL, as the most influential clearinghouse for the student libertarian movement, would legitimize and reinforce this approach even as others insisted upon the opposite extremes: immediate revolution or pure self-edification.

Devoted students of Objectivism claimed that they were strictly distinct from libertarians, who merely acted out of stale cynicism, a superficial reaction without any positive proposals for change.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, more radical libertarians, like Tuccille and Rothbard, became increasingly interested in taking their ideas in anarchistic directions, engaging in an almost “Oedipal revolt” against their former mentor.¹⁴⁸ Rand castigated libertarians of all stripes and denied her connection to them. Even though Objectivism appeared to be a logical stepping stone to their positions, she would not countenance youth who might defuse the uniqueness of her ideas. With Objectivists, libertarians, anarchists, minarchists, anarcho-capitalists, autarkists, and many others battling over political niceties, it was now evident that “the quietest revolution in history” was no longer so quiet. With the sixties coming to a close and the demands of adulthood approaching, youth would begin to broaden their intellectual horizons and modify their political ambitions.

EPILOGUE: MEMORY & HISTORY

In 1965, a young student of Objectivism envisaged how future historians would tell the story of the Randian-inspired “cultural revolution.” With predictable inflexibility, he divided his historical narrative into three distinct stages. “Stage One,” lasting from 1957 to 1970, would mark the founding of NBI, along with the mounting popularity of Rand’s writings and lectures on Objectivism. Overlapping with the first stage, “Stage Two” would cover the years from 1960 to

¹⁴⁷ David Oyerly, “Why I Am Not a Libertarian,” *Objectivist Club of Eastern Michigan*, November 1988, 9-10.

¹⁴⁸ Burns, 251.

1975, as Objectivism became “a recognized school of philosophy at American colleges and universities,” with an elite group of “hard core” followers serving as professors and intellectuals. True laissez-faire capitalism would finally become a topic “discussed at cocktail parties” and “treated in Sunday supplements.” During the last stage, from 1965 to 1990, Objectivism would “[diffuse] throughout the culture,” capturing the imaginations of educated youth as well as forcing the masses to take notice. New generations of children would be taught by “rational teachers” who stressed the primacy of the mind. Concluding his historical account, the student wrote, “It is only after Stage Three is well underway that political action can even begin to bring returns.”¹⁴⁹

This student’s sequence of events is less revealing for its precision than for its evocation of how youth wished to be perceived in American memory. Idealized expectations regarding the “cultural revolution” were so entrancing that it was easy for youth to gloss over several key contradictions in their historical interaction with Rand’s ideas. Most noticeably, although Rand herself would repeatedly stress the importance of mind-body unity, her philosophy was attractive precisely because it placed the intellect above all else. She encouraged in already cerebral youth a strident emphasis on the theoretical, often at the expense of the practical, a fact which helps to explain her apparently fleeting influence on the young. Furthermore, the integrated nature of Objectivism appeared to demand wholesale, immediate change, yet Rand’s stress on intellectualism was admittedly evolutionary rather than revolutionary in nature. Inevitably, young people would realize the magnitude of this dilemma, as group interactions required compromise and as emotions entered into the most rational of negotiations. Although right-wing youth might have wished to attain complete theoretical consistency in their own lives, the events of the sixties would force them to straddle the line between the personal and the political, immediatism and gradualism, withdrawal

¹⁴⁹ Harry Binswanger, “Reality Is On Our Side,” *IREC Review* 1, no. 6 (Feb. 22, 1965): 5-8.

and participation. Rand's followers would eventually enter practical politics on their own terms, *without* the clear endorsement of their former figurehead.

One former devotee, reflecting on her reaction to Dagny Taggart, the heroine of *Atlas Shrugged*, took note of “the tension [Dagny] produces between unattainable longing to be like her, and the knowledge that we do not transcend our contexts.”¹⁵⁰ To acknowledge this aspect of Objectivism, its capacity to inspire as well as to induce skepticism, is not to say that Rand's influence was completely lost once youth entered political adulthood. By making the choice to integrate thought and action, rather than prioritizing one over the other, sixties youth proved that Rand's influence was more than simply a residue of adolescent immaturity. On the contrary, Objectivism possessed unique longevity, persisting within the right-wing psyche even after youth had established careers and formed families.

Rand had created a fictionalized world in which all could unfold in accordance with her very high expectations. It was this world which provided fodder for youthful fantasies, a resting point where youth could contemplate the contours of a radically different way of life. Objectivism had been a rite-of-passage, a corridor to right-wing thought, but the very act of recognizing its inadequacies represented the greatest honor that young people could ever bestow on Rand. In their respect for the power of reason, they had ultimately come to value their own minds – even over Rand's – as guides for individual action.

¹⁵⁰ Karen Michalson, “Dagny and Me,” in Edward W. Younkins, ed., *Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged: A Philosophical and Literary Companion* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 249.

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APPENDIX



Ayn Rand and her sisters, ca. 1911. From left to right: Natasha, two-and-a-half years younger than Ayn; Nora, five years younger than Ayn; and Ayn.

(The Ayn Rand Institute)



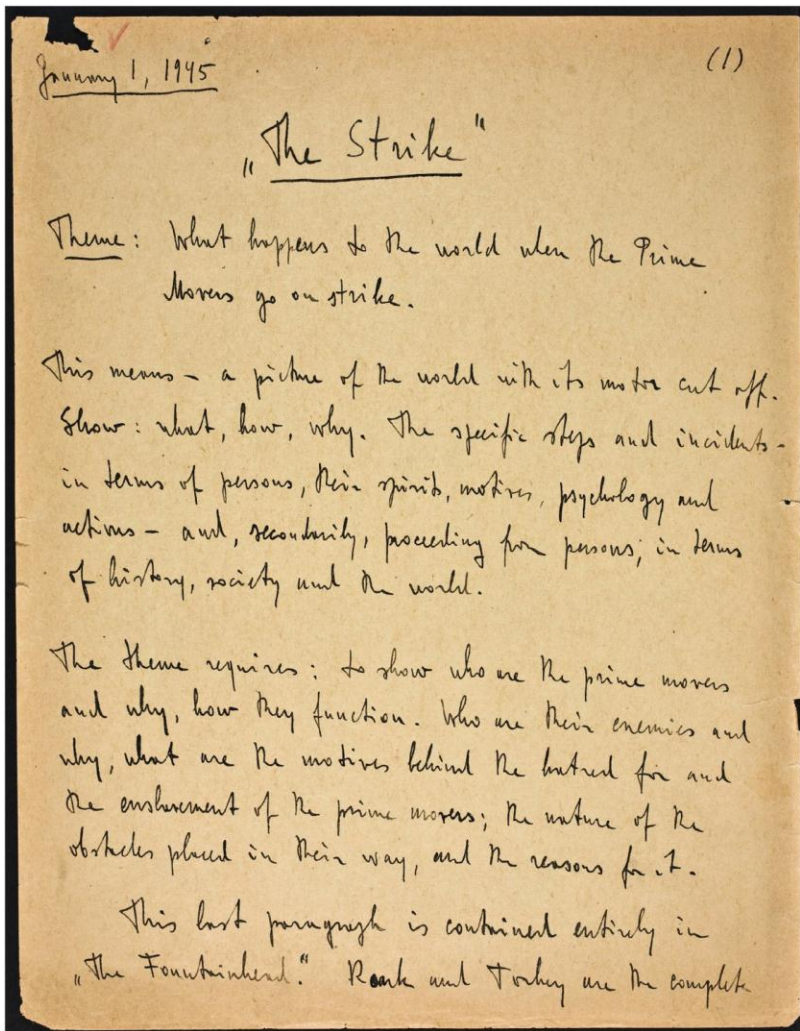
One of a series of photos taken in 1957 by Phyllis Cerf for the dust jacket of *Atlas Shrugged*.

(The Ayn Rand Institute)



Rand's favorite photo of herself, displayed on the dust jacket of *The Fountainhead* (1943).

(The Ayn Rand Institute)



January 1, 1945, "The Strike," p. 1
Handwritten notes on *Atlas Shrugged*
Reproduction on paper
Ayn Rand Archives

From the earliest extant notes stating the theme and meaning of "The Strike," the original title of *Atlas Shrugged*.

In the 1940s, strikes initiated by organized labor were a well-known tactic of the American liberal left.

Rand thought that it would be both dramatic and ironic to present a strike by industrialists—the "prime movers"—against a moral code that branded them as evil exploiters. Eventually, Rand dropped the original title, "The Strike," as too journalistic sounding.

"Atlas Shrugged and Its Ideas," an online exhibit

This online exhibit of selections from the hand-written draft of Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged* includes manuscript pages previously exhibited at the Frances Howard Goldwyn Hollywood Regional Library in 2007.

Jeff Britting, Curator/Archivist of the Ayn Rand Archives,
A Special Collection of the Ayn Rand Institute

Manuscript pages from *Atlas Shrugged* © Leonard Peikoff, All Rights Reserved
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Nathaniel Branden, Rand's early "intellectual heir," standing behind an NBI podium.

(Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market*)



Barbara Branden (right) serves as moderator, while Rand (left) answers questions after an NBI lecture.

(*Saturday Evening Post*, Nov. 11, 1961)

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FOR CRIMES AGAINST INDIVIDUALS

THEFT — Taxation, eminent domain, confiscation of drugs, books, weapons, etc.

REPRESSION — censorship, liquor laws, sex laws, anti-trust laws, etc.

SLAVERY — Selective Slavery System (conscription)

KIDNAPPING — compulsory indoctrination of children in statist schools

NUISANCE — licensing, drug raids, vice raids, "blue" laws, etc.

FRAUD — Social Security, public education, foreign aid, and various other social experiments

ALIASES: Uncle Sam, Public Servant, Welfare State, Big Brother, World Peacemaker, et al.

DESCRIPTION: height — piled higher and deeper
weight — as much as he can throw around
eyes — his "EYE" is everywhere

OCCUPATION: professional thug of the "silent majority"

CAUTION: subject is heavily armed and dangerous and is frequently found lurking in and around world councils, in the company of other states.

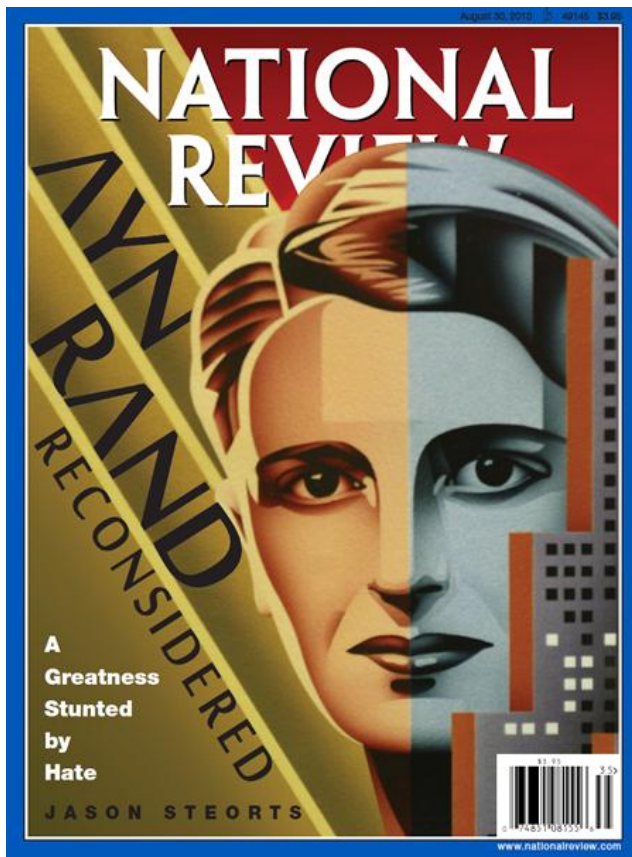
LIBERTARIAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

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(Lawrence Samuels Collection, Folder 1-7, General Flyers, 1971-1984, Hoover Institution Archives)



Two covers of *National Review*: the October 1967 issue (top); the August 2010 issue (bottom). Nearly half a decade later, mainstream conservatives' estimation of Rand seems to have changed little.





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BASIC PRINCIPLES OF OBJECTIVISM

New York Series

The course of lectures on the BASIC PRINCIPLES OF OBJECTIVISM offers a detailed, systematic exposition of the philosophy defined by Ayn Rand and presented in *The Fountainhead*, *Atlas Shrugged* and *For the New Intellectual*.

In opposition to the neo-mystics who preach that reality is unknowable; that reason is impotent; that morality is a matter of faith and force, with self-sacrifice as its standard and a collectivist dictatorship as its goal — Objectivism holds that reality exists as an objective absolute; that reason is man's means of perceiving it; that morality is a rational science, with man's life as its standard, self-interest as its motor, individual happiness as its goal and a free society as its consequence.

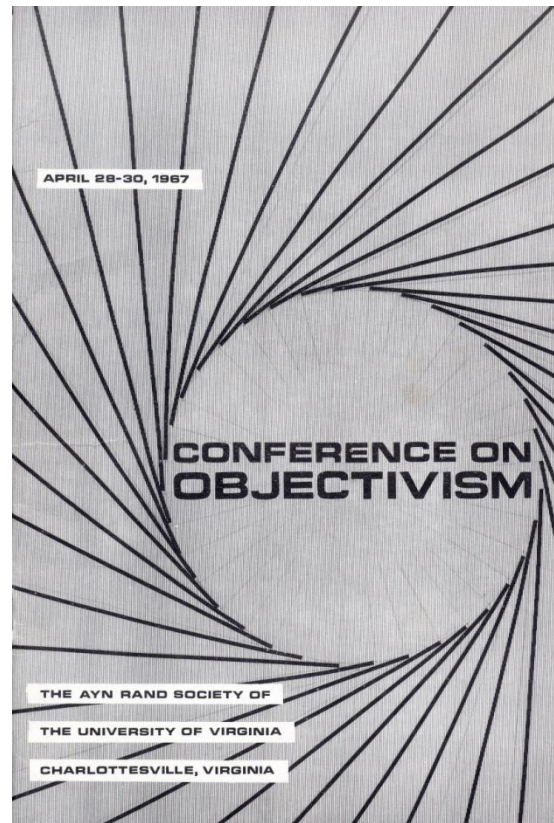
Prepared by Nathaniel Branden, the lectures are devoted to a presentation of Ayn Rand's philosophy, including aspects not yet covered in her written works—and to Mr. Branden's extension of Objectivism into his own field, psychology, giving special emphasis to the concepts of human nature, mental health and personal development.

The New York series, given twice a year, is delivered by Nathaniel Branden, with several guest lectures by his associates. A question period follows each lecture.

Ayn Rand joins Mr. Branden during many of the question periods, and students have the opportunity to address questions directly to her.

The course consists of twenty weekly lectures.

(continued on back page)



Front page of an NBI pamphlet advertising the most popular lecture series, *Basic Principles of Objectivism*.

(The Ayn Rand Institute)

Cover of pamphlet for the first ever Conference on Objectivism, fittingly held in Thomas Jefferson's birthplace, Virginia.

(The Ayn Rand Institute)



A listener inquires about the finer points of Objectivism during NBI's question-answer period.

(The Saturday Evening Post)



Students at the University of Washington discuss Objectivism in the cafeteria. Journalist Dora Jane Hamblin took note of their “primly belligerent” and “humorless” appearances.

(Life, April 27, 1967)

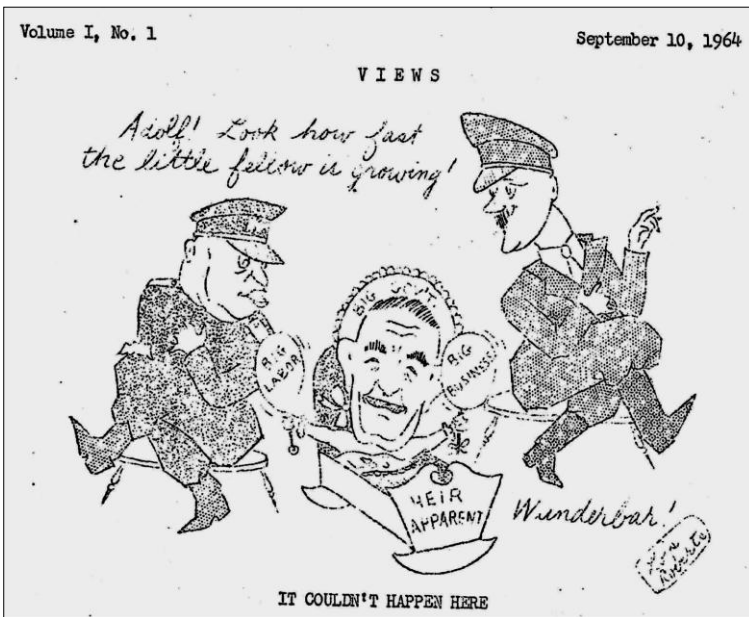
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JOAN KENNEDY TAYLOR, EDITOR

The masthead of *Persuasion*, the only political periodical Rand ever endorsed.



In its first issue, *Persuasion* presented voters with this specter: a vote for Johnson would mean a vote for fascism.

A cartoon accompanying Dawson's first article for *Persuasion's* draft series. Men are depicted as mere "plants" to be plucked at the will of the community.



(The Ayn Rand Institute)