

Creator/Egoism vs. Secondhand/Altruism

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The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand is more than a book about architecture. It is about love, motivation, and endurance. When first beginning to read this book, I had no idea what I was getting into. It is a book full of such deep thoughts that it took me a week to soak in all that Ayn Rand had to say. As I write this paper, I truly begin to understand what Rand was saying. It also helped that I learned what egoism and altruism were. Rand's book depicts the conflict between creator vs. secondhand and egoism vs. altruism and the relationship that goes on between creator and egoism and secondhand and altruism.

Creator vs. Secondhand. By definition, creator is the one that creates by bringing something new or original into being and secondhand acquires after being used by another. The conflict arises when secondhand scorn creators for their designs but then uses it for their own motives. The conflict is quite parasitical in nature. The secondhand feeds off of the creator. Keating describes his own parasitical nature to Roark. "Howard, I'm a parasite. I've been a parasite all my life. You designed my best projects at Stanton. You designed my first house...Cosmo-Slotnik Building. I have fed on you and on all the men like you who lived before we were born...if they hadn't existed. I wouldn't have known how to put stone on stone...I have taken than which was not mine and given nothing in return (576)." Roark on the other hand was a creator. "I designed Cortlandt. I gave it to you (685)." He also describes this more deeply in the court case over the Cortlandt building. "No creator was prompted by a desire to serve his brothers...his truth was his only motive (680)." These natures conflict because the creator does what he does for himself, and the secondhand takes the creator's ideas and uses it for himself.

Egoism vs. Altruism. These ideas conflict over the motivation to perform an action. Egoists do what they do for themselves. They might not even do it for their own self-importance. But they still do it for themselves. Roark was an egoist because he never built a building for

others he only built it for himself. “But I am not an altruist (585)...I wished to come hear and say that I am a man who does not exist for others (586)”. An altruist is motivated by what they can do for others. “Altruism is the doctrine which demands that man live for others and place others above self (681).” They never think about themselves when they do an action. During the conversation between Howard Roark and Peter Keating about the Cortlandt project, Howard explains the difference between altruism and egoism. Roark to Keating “You’ll accept such gratitude as the tenants might feel. And I--I’ll take what nobody can give a man except himself. I will have built Cortlandt (582).”

The creator and egoism are closely connected in their natures. The creator uses egoism to create. Their motivation comes from themselves. When combined creator and egoists are motivated by what they need to do to make themselves feel complete. For example, Roark never looked more complete unless he was working in an unfinished structure. Roark values his ideas above everything else. “His own truth, and his own work to achieve it in his own way...He held his truth above all things and against all men (680).” The truth in this quotation would make more sense if replaced with the word idea. So here it is replaced. I think it speaks for itself: His own idea, and his own work to achieve it in his own way...He held his idea above all things and against all men. Roark is a creator/egoist. He shows this in his conversation with Henry Cameron when he was first applying to Cameron for a job. Roark to Cameron “Because I love this earth. That’s all I love. I don’t like the shape of things on this earth. I want to change them. “For whom?” For myself (49).” Creators use egoism to develop their ideas because egoists are driven by themselves. Creators use that drive to develop ideas that satisfy needs and wants in their world.

Just as creator and egoism are closely linked, the secondhand and altruism are connected.

Their relationship is based more on what they can do for others. Secondhanders use other people's ideas in an altruistic way. They use their ideas for the benefit of others. Roark describes how secondhanders tried to turn the Cortlandt building into altruism. "But the owners of Cortlandt got what they needed from me. They wanted a scheme devised to build a structure...they took the benefit of my work and made me contribute it as a gift (685)."

Ayn Rand's book *The Fountainhead* takes a tale about architecture and turns it into a lesson about society. She describes the conflict between creator or the designer and the secondhanders who take others' ideas for their own. She shows the difference between egoism and altruism. Where you either do an idea for yourself or an idea for the benefit of others. Rand also shows that egoism and creator go hand in hand because they are designing for themselves. And how the secondhanders use altruism to justify their actions of stealing others' ideas.