

**Sławomir Drelich**

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

# The Revolutionary Political Philosophy of Ayn Rand

## 1. Introduction: Ayn Rand as a political philosopher

Ayn Rand was born in 1905 in Saint Petersburg and died in 1982 in New York. Both the cities became a kind of tie that defined her way of life. Petersburg – through the experience of the Bolshevik October Revolution – became a symbol of communist totalitarianism and collectivist administrative command economy. New York remained, as it does today, a symbol of capitalist free market economy and American liberalism. Petersburg was Rand's memory which she wanted to escape from as soon as possible, and indeed after graduation she managed to emigrate from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics<sup>1</sup>. New York, on the other hand, became her new homeland – the crowning of libertarian aspirations and dreams, the fulfillment of the American dream of a young escapee from poor Eastern Europe<sup>2</sup>. The Petrograd and the New York experience largely shaped her intellectually and politically, making Rand a libertarian campaigner – referred to by some as a liberal or libertarian thinker<sup>3</sup>, by others – as a laissez-faire thinker<sup>4</sup>, or according to the nomenclature she developed by herself – as an objectivist<sup>5</sup>. It must be pointed out that Rand avoided any distinction: she never defined herself as a libertarian, and often disputed the views of some representatives of this trend (such as Friedrich A. von Hayek). Jennifer Burns notes: “Although Rand would never appreciate their efforts, her political beliefs were shared by the Libertarian Party, who worked vigorously to provide an alternative to the majority party stars Reagan, Ford, and Carter”<sup>6</sup>. She established a philosophical school which she called objectivism<sup>7</sup>, and her views can be better defined within ontological realism, rationalism and epistemological empiricism, ethical and axiological absolutism, anthropological individualism, libertarianism

<sup>1</sup> B. Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, New York 1987, pp. 3–7.

<sup>2</sup> B. Branden, *The Passion...*, pp. 67–70.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Rau, *Liberalizm. Zarys myśli politycznej XIX i XX wieku* [Eng. *Liberalism. An overview of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century political thought*], Warszawa 2000, pp. 175–179; J. Burns, *Godless capitalism: Ayn Rand and the conservative movement*, “Modern Intellectual History” 2004/1, p. 361.

<sup>4</sup> T. Teluk, *Libertarianizm. Krytyka* [Eng. *Libertarianism. Critique*], Gliwice–Warszawa 2009, pp. 138–155; R. Legutko, *Spory o kapitalizm* [Eng. *Disputes over capitalism*], Kraków 1994, pp. 119–123.

<sup>5</sup> J. Bartyzel, *W gąszczu liberalizmów. Próba periodyzacji i klasyfikacji* [Eng. *In the maze of liberalisms. An attempt of periodization and classification*], Lublin 2012, pp. 145–146.

<sup>6</sup> J. Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, Oxford 2009, p. 275.

<sup>7</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness. A New Concept of Egoism*, New York 1964, pp. 11–13; F. Seddon, *Ayn Rand, Objectivists, and the History of Philosophy*, Lanham 2003, p. VIII.

and political minarchism as well as economic laissez-faire. Today there are two organizations dedicated to advancing Rand's philosophy: the Ayn Rand Institute and the Atlas Society<sup>8</sup>. Since Rand formulated a system that we are able to define as complete and consistent, without much doubt she can be called a philosopher<sup>9</sup>. As the system provides its own concept of society, state, law and economy, based on anthropological, ethical, axiological and ontological assumptions, Rand can be referred to as a representative of political philosophy.

The basic purpose of this work is to present Rand's concept as a kind of revolutionary, or in other words, extremely radical thought. This is not the perspective commonly used by scholars, and even those who call Rand the creator of a utopian concept probably have not looked at her possible revolutionism in a multidimensional way. The five distinct interpretative aspects of such revolutionism will be characterized. It seems that only discussing each of them separately allows us to fully understand the revolutionism of Rand's overall project. Revolution will be understood to some extent in accordance with the intuitions of Alexis de Tocqueville, who defined it as "an overthrow of the legally constituted elite, which initiated a period of intense social, political, and economic change"<sup>10</sup>. If we were to distinguish between the palace, the political and the social revolutions<sup>11</sup>, then it would be appropriate to assume that in the context of reflection on Rand's thought revolution will be interpreted in political and social terms. In addition, we also accept the conclusion that "revolution destroys pre-revolutionary sources, provides few contemporary ones, engenders the lives of those who venture too close"<sup>12</sup>. In this text it will be pointed out, therefore, that Rand's revolution should be understood: 1) as an anti-mystical revolution that is to rebuild social awareness leading to rejection of all views and superstitions of a religious or irrational character; 2) as an anthropological revolution, or as a proposal to redefine the concept of man, his nature and ways of self-realization; 3) as a social revolution aimed at radical reconstruction of interpersonal relations and creation of a new social structure through the prism of new, different criteria; 4) as a political revolution consisting in the overthrow of an extended and centralized state and creation of a new system; 5) as an economic revolution whose principal purpose will be to reformulate the economic system and turn it towards the classical capitalist model. The presented interpretative perspective may be complementary to research on Rand's thought. What may be undoubtedly interesting are the conclusions of Polish researchers absent from the works concerning Rand published in the United States, cited in this paper. The text is the result of research on the content of Rand's most important works which deal with the issues of radical reconstruction of society, state, and economy. The most significant ones include novels *Atlas Shrugged* and *Fountainhead* and a short story *Anthem*, as well as collections of essays and feuilletons: *Return of the Primitive*, *The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, *A New Concept of Egoism*, *Capitalism*, *The Unknown Ideal*, *Philosophy*, *Who needs it* and *For the New Intellectual*. There will also be references to thinkers who continued Rand's philosophical and theoretical concepts, referred to them or criticized them.

<sup>8</sup> R.E. Merrill, M. Familaro Enright, *Ayn Rand Explained*, Chicago 2013, p. 6; M.R. Gladstein, *The New Ayn Rand Companion*, Westport 1999, p. 18. See also: G. Weiss, *Ayn Rand Nation: The Hidden Struggle for America's Soul*, New York 2012.

<sup>9</sup> See also: R. Nozick, *On the Randian Argument*, "The Personalist" 1971/52, pp. 282–304.

<sup>10</sup> A. de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, New York 1955, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> H. Lasswell, A. Kaplan, *Power and Society*, New Haven 1950, p. 252.

<sup>12</sup> P.A.R. Calvert, *Revolution: the Politics of Violence*, "Political Studies" 1967/1, p. 1.

## 2. Aspect 1: Anti-mystical revolution

Rand's revolutionary thought would not be complete without striving for a radical re-definition of the human mentality, and through this – re-evaluation of the whole of the axionormative system on which people base their views of the world. Rand wants to overcome the trappings of mysticism and irrationality in which, in her opinion, human beings find themselves by rebuilding the human mentality. Her anti-mystical views and the aversion to religion became the basis for her political and economic views<sup>13</sup>. In *Return of the Primitive* the author reminds that

man came into his own in Greece, some two-and-a-half thousand years ago. The birth of philosophy marked his adulthood; not the *content* of any particular system of philosophy, but deeper: the *concept* of philosophy – the realization that a comprehensive view of existence is to be reached by man's *mind*<sup>14</sup>.

This process of “standing on one's own feet” came about by man's turning towards reason as the chief value, and at the same time the most important tool of getting to know the world and himself. The ancient Greeks, by their philosophy, built up the rationalistic foundations of civilization and consequently turned away from mysticism of all kinds. Today, however, man seems to be returning to mystical movements and adopting an irrational perspective. Doubt in the mind and cognitive abilities of man has become not only typical of so-called Average Joe, but has begun to dominate among intellectuals and academics as well. Rand thus suggests – as we see in the title of the work mentioned above – that we are witnessing the return of man to the primordial, primitive or pre-dawn times. This is precisely the mystique of all kinds that Rand understands as

the acceptance of allegations without evidence or proof, either apart from or *against* the evidence of one's senses and one's reason. Mysticism is the claim to some non-sensory, non-rational, non-definable, non-identifiable means of knowledge, such as “instinct”, “intuition”, “revelation”, or any form of “just knowing”<sup>15</sup>.

All these weaknesses, which rational man managed to overcome, today return with redoubled strength, becoming the obligatory philosophy of the people of the West. In the work *Philosophy: Who Needs It* Rand points out that the example of the rule of mysticism in European history was the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance can undoubtedly be described as a temporary overthrow of this reign and a return to the principles of reason<sup>16</sup>. Nowadays, mystical tendencies are visible not only in philosophy but also in psychology or literature<sup>17</sup>, which systematically ruins the entire western humanities.

A result of doubt in reason is doubt in man, therefore, the mental anti-ideological revolution which Rand postulates is a necessary factor in building a new order. Rand pessimistically concludes that “most men spend their lives in futile rebellion against things they cannot change, in passive resignation to things they can, and – never attempting to learn the difference – in chronic guilt and self-doubt on both counts”<sup>18</sup>. In the first place, the “mental rebellion” should lead man to reconcile with reality,

<sup>13</sup> J. Gotthelf, G. Salmieri, *A Companion to Ayn Rand*, Hoboken 2016, p. 357, 417.

<sup>14</sup> A. Rand, *Return of Primitive. The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, New York 1999, p. 45.

<sup>15</sup> A. Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, New York 1984, p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> A. Rand, *Philosophy...*, p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> A. Rand, *Philosophy...*, pp. 96–97.

<sup>18</sup> A. Rand, *Philosophy...*, p. 32.

or accept the world as it really is. Secondly, man should understand that the world surrounding him is also subjected to some modernization and creative pressure. The human individual must therefore know the boundaries of his creative possibilities, and then boldly rebuild the world. Increasing mystical tendencies are also accompanied by, according to Rand, dangerous skepticism. As she claims,

both the mystic and the skeptic are exponents of faith in the technical sense of the term. “Faith” means acceptance on the basis of feeling rather than of evidence. The mystic has faith that there is a certainty which eludes the mind; the skeptic has faith that the mind’s certainties are no certainty at all<sup>19</sup>.

All these phenomena can be commonly termed irrationalism because their effect is to undermine the power of reason and its importance in the development of Western civilization. As Jacek Bartyzel points out, irrationality is interpreted by Rand very widely. Such a notion is in fact used to define quite diverse currents such as Platonism, Cartesianism, empiricism, pragmatism, positivism, social Darwinism, Marxism, existentialism and Christian spirituality, Kantianism<sup>20</sup>. Such a broad interpretation of irrationalism and mysticism in this concept justifies the conclusion of Zbigniew Rau, who points out that according to Rand the whole history of mankind goes on exactly in the vein of domination of irrationality, and that the manifestations of rationalism and turning to reason are only short episodes in that history<sup>21</sup>. Of course, a particular form of mysticism, deserving – in Rand’s view – exceptional condemnation, is the religious outlook. Rand notices that “philosophy is the goal toward which religion was only a helplessly blind groping”<sup>22</sup> – however, what she has in mind is only a philosophy based on rationality. Therefore, every religion is in fact a radical form of man’s breaking away from an objectively existing reality<sup>23</sup> and relying on delusions. The anti-mystical revolution that would be done in the human mentality also implies fighting with religion. Rand is convinced that the return to reason will make man free from mystical deception.

### 3. Aspect 2: Anthropological revolution

Revolutionism of Rand’s anthropological project is primarily about striving for a new definition of man, and, in fact, rebuilding it – as the thinker claims – looking at man who is in harmony with human nature. Rand expressed interpretation of her revolutionary approach to anthropology in *The Romantic Manifesto*, where she presented motives of her writing: “The motive and purpose of my writing can best be summed up by saying that if a dedication page were to precede the total of my work, it would read: To the glory of Man”<sup>24</sup>. Rand’s aim is to honor man in whom she sees the creator of the world, development and progress maker. She thinks of man as *homo creator* – an ambitious and creative creature, a specific counterpart of the Nietzschean “overman” (German: *Übermensch*) or the Carlylean “hero”. A perfect man or one approaching perfection is a creator who subjugates the world of nature, rebuilds it, and adapts it to his own needs. According to Rand, our civilization does not adequately value extraordinary people, *i.e.* those who after all were

<sup>19</sup> L. Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, New York 1993, p. 183.

<sup>20</sup> J. Bartyzel, *W gąszczu...*, p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> Z. Rau, *Liberalizm...*, p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> A. Rand, *Return...*, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Z. Rau, *Liberalizm...*, p. 176.

<sup>24</sup> A. Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto. A Philosophy of Literature*, New York 1975, p. 165.

or still are the driving force of development. Thus revolutionism of her project is in disagreement with contemporary egalitarian, collectivist and mystical currents which perceive man as a grouped animal, completely subordinated to the community to which he belongs. The author of *Atlas Shrugged*, analyzing the history of human civilization, points out that so far outstanding people have allowed mediocre majority to dominate them, creating their works for social benefit without expecting gratitude and respect. Rand, however, announces the rebellion of an active man, of creators and inventors who should finally start fighting for the right place in the world for themselves. She declares that every creator should resemble John Galt, the hero of one of her books, and “John Galt is Prometheus who changed his mind. After centuries of being torn by vultures in payment for having brought to men the fire of the gods, he broke his chains and he withdrew his fire – until the day when men withdraw their vultures”<sup>25</sup>. Outstanding people create values and therefore they should have a unique position in the world because after all – as one of Rand’s colleagues, Peter Schwartz, wrote – “the history of mankind is the history of the creation of values”<sup>26</sup>. Man creator as a creature that deserves world domination takes an optimistic attitude in relation to the surrounding environment. Rand demands that this new man reject not only the egalitarian ideologies but also the religious view claiming that man is merely a poor creation of the will of transcendence. The ideological declaration of all creators should sound as John Galt suggested in his speech in *Atlas Shrugged*:

We do not think that tragedy is our natural fate and we do not live in chronic dread of disaster. We do not expect disaster until we have specific reason to expect it – and when we encounter it, we are free to fight it. It is not happiness, but suffering that we consider unnatural. It is not success, but calamity that we regard as the abnormal exception in human life<sup>27</sup>.

Morally perfect people – those who are to lead the world after the overthrow of a system based on weakness, resentment, mysticism and collectivism – will follow the principle of exchange in the interpersonal relationship, which is a principle based on justice. Therefore, the ideal and at the same time the symbol of the perfect man for Rand is a trader. In the *Virtue of Selfishness*, the American philosopher argues that

a trader is a man who earns what he gets and does not give or take the undeserved. He does not treat men as masters or slaves, but as independent equals. He deals with men by means of a free, voluntary, unforced, uncoerced exchange – an exchange which benefits both parties by their own independent judgment<sup>28</sup>.

A world in which every man aspires to adopt a mercantile model of life would be a world of progression and development, but at the same time it would be a world in which the main principle of conduct would be the principle of justice. Rand cites examples of great fortunes and at the same time inventions initiated by modern entrepreneurs and industrialists. In *Capitalism. The Unknown ideal* she writes that “when great industrialists made fortunes on a free market (*i.e.*, without the use of force, without government assistance or interference), they *created* new wealth – they did not take it from those who had *not* created it”<sup>29</sup>. Rand’s anthropological revolution focuses on

<sup>25</sup> A. Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, New York 1996, p. 478.

<sup>26</sup> P. Schwartz, *Multicultural Nihilism*, in: A. Rand, *Return...*, p. 245.

<sup>27</sup> A. Rand, *Atlas...*, p. 696.

<sup>28</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue...*, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> A. Rand, *Capitalism. The Unknown Ideal*, New York 1967, p. 25.

transforming man in the vein of a *homo creator* whose life will not be merely perseverance and survival, but it will become a kind of *vita activa*. Man should also abandon a lifestyle based on looting, the victims of which are representatives of active and ambitious minority, the core of world progress. Rand, of course, realizes that “man has to be man by choice – and it is the task of ethics to teach him how to live like man”<sup>30</sup>, since it is only the free choice of life model that makes humanity possible. However, the model of life based on systemic and legal looting, a model in which the state takes on the role of Robin Hood, who deprives the most valuable individuals the fruits of their labor with disdain, is not only immoral but also makes the majority of the society get accustomed to passive, idle, unproductive and a *de facto* unmanly life. In *Atlas Shrugged* she warns that “until men learn that of all human symbols, Robin Hood is the most immoral and the most contemptible, there will be no justice on earth and no way for mankind to survive”<sup>31</sup>. Schwartz emphasizes it is necessary to be aware that “mankind advanced only because some individuals originated better ways of doing things (and because the rest of society came to see the validity of those innovations)”<sup>32</sup>. The anthropological revolution proposed by Rand is to transform man – and this is about returning to human nature that was distorted and transformed by an expanded and centralized state, collectivized society, religious mysticism, and mixed economy increasingly distant from capitalism.

#### 4. Aspect 3: Social revolution

Henry Hazlitt, an economist, cited the words of Ludwig von Mises, who supposedly described Rand as “the bravest man in America”. Apparently, the author of *Atlas Shrugged* was delighted with this formulation<sup>33</sup>. Mises’s conclusion was due to his deep conviction of courage and uncompromisingness of the project proposed by Rand. Indeed, the author of *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* never referred to her as a revolutionary, but he was aware of radicalism of her beliefs and proposals. The revolution that Rand wished to make society undergo was to reformulate it into a rational community. Since reason was one of the principal values of her objectivist ethics, one of the tasks of her thought was to radically rebuild society exactly in the vein of reason and rationality. The main virtue that would be applicable to such a rational society was egoism. However, Rand repeatedly emphasized that in order to understand this virtue in accordance with her idea, all superstitions and stereotypes rooted in modern societies should be dispelled. In her collection of essays *The Virtue of Selfishness* she argued that “it is only on the basis of rational selfishness – on the basis of justice – that men can be fit to live together in a free, peaceful, prosperous, benevolent, rational society”<sup>34</sup>. Redefining egoism as an expected and at the same time positive social attitude is, of course, complementary to Rand’s proposed pattern of man as a trader. The trader is guided by his own interests, but his rational selfishness does not allow him to break the law or deal with another man against the common rules of morality. Egoism must be rational, or subordinate not only to the individual’s particular interests, but also

<sup>30</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue*..., p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> A. Rand, *Atlas*..., p. 532.

<sup>32</sup> P. Schwartz, *Multicultural*..., p. 245.

<sup>33</sup> J. Maurone, *The Trickster Icon and Objectivism*, “The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies” 2002/2, p. 246.

<sup>34</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue*..., p. 28.

to objective ethical standards. Thus one cannot criticize Rand's concept as extreme atomism, in which the participation of the human individual in communities is completely excluded. It seems obvious to her that every man should benefit from life in society, but that society must be "human" to every individual, and its functioning must be based on knowledge and trade as the principle of interpersonal relations. But before society can be revolutionized by spreading the principle of rational egoism, it will be necessary to eliminate all forms of altruism. Rand regards altruism as a principle which results in taking unjustified advantage by so-called *second-handers*, namely individuals living off the state, society and the goods created by active, ambitious and resourceful people<sup>35</sup>. She claims that

parasites, moochers, looters, brutes and thugs can be of no value to a human being – nor can he gain any benefit from living in a society geared to their needs, demands and protection, a society that treats him as a sacrificial animal and penalizes him for his virtues in order to reward them for their vices, which means: a society based on the ethics of altruism<sup>36</sup>.

Ethics of altruism – according to Rand – destroys society: it creates the foundations of injustice, exploits creators by second-handers, devaluates the work of ambitious people, and values laziness, inertia and passivity.

Rand suggests that the new society should follow the patterns of the American society created at the very beginning. In her opinion, "the first society in history whose leaders were neither Attilas nor Witch Doctors, a society led, dominated and created by the Producers, was the United States of America"<sup>37</sup>. The foundation of a rational society should be the individual responsibility of every man for himself, not the responsibility of society and the state for people – a common-sense principle that seems obvious and natural<sup>38</sup>. Rand's social revolution assumes the declaration of an uncompromising fight against all parasitic social groups that benefit from functioning in the mixed economy, take advantage of a number of so-called public services, and live at the expense of other people's work, which is often unjustified. In her opinion, mixed economy allows the so-called traders of favors to benefit from the use of state apparatus and institutions as well as various kinds of goods<sup>39</sup>, which is directly called "cannibalistic philosophy" or "looting projects"<sup>40</sup>. In the new society it will be necessary to break with the principles created by collectivist circles that say:

They proclaim that every man born is entitled to exist without labor and, the laws of reality to the contrary notwithstanding, is entitled to receive his "minimum sustenance" – his food, his clothes, his shelter – with no effort on his part, as his due and his birthright. To receive it – from whom? Blank-out. Every man, they announce, owns an equal share of the technological benefits created in the world<sup>41</sup>.

Rand is well aware that the social revolution that she imagines is impossible without radical action, hence the idea of a strike of the creators which became the canvas of *Atlas Shrugged*. This novel is her *magnum opus*, and it has been very popular in the United

<sup>35</sup> R.L. Campbell, *Altruism in August Comte and Ayn Rand*, "The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies" 2006/2, pp. 361–362.

<sup>36</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue...*, p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> A. Rand, *For the New Intellectual*, New York 1968, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue...*, p. 48; J. Gotthelf, G. Salmieri, *A Companion...*, p. 335.

<sup>39</sup> A. Rand, *Atlas...*, pp. 933–937.

<sup>40</sup> A. Rand, *Atlas...*, pp. 926–930.

<sup>41</sup> A. Rand, *Atlas...*, p. 955.

States to this day. In the 1990s, the Library of Congress of the United States recognized it as the second most influential book in the twentieth century after the Bible.

In *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand suggested that all the creators go on strike and exclude themselves from the society. In her opinion, it is the only way that the idea of the social revolution proclaimed by her would be fulfilled. First, you have to lead to disaster and the fall of society, which will be abandoned by all creators. Only then will the creators be able to return, take their place in the social hierarchy, and introduce the righteous principles of objective ethics. Striking creators in Rand's novel verbalize the philosophy of action that lies at the root of their decision in the following words: "We are on strike against self-immolation. We are on strike against the creed of unearned rewards and unrewarded duties. We are on strike against the dogma that the pursuit of one's happiness is evil. We are on strike against the doctrine that life is guilt"<sup>42</sup>. Rand suggests that without creators – extraordinary people, those who are also referred to as "traders" or "producers" – our world is not able to survive. The paradox is that the right to strike, which Rand refers to, was created by collectivists, processors and a state system based on centralization of power and mixed economy. The characters of *Atlas Shrugged* declare that "the freedom to agree or disagree is the foundation of our kind of society – and the freedom to strike is a part of it"<sup>43</sup>. Thus the social revolution proposed by Rand is a revolutionary event in the strict sense of the word. The departure of creators, according to her, is supposed to lead to an early economic catastrophe, the fall of businesses left behind by professional supervision, then to famine, rise of crime, breakdown of state structures, or simply to anarchy. In this sense Rand is radically subversive and uncompromising, but the reason for this is her conviction that a system based on modern institutions of a centralized state and mixed economy can no longer be reformed. Only a revolution can end their existence and restore the world to the natural principles of objective ethics, which are based on reason and justice.

## 5. Aspect 4: Political revolution

It is only an effective social revolution that will enable what can be described as a political aspect of Rand's revolution. And here the fundamental problem is the institution of the state, whose necessity Rand does not deny, but it is rightly classified as the so-called radical liberalism or libertarianism, the majority of supporters of which favor the so-called minarchism or the idea of a minimal state. The state in itself – as Rand argues – is a form of tyranny resulting in limitation of a certain range of individual human freedoms by the political power. In *The Virtue of Selfishness* the author proves that "most political systems were variants of the same statist tyranny, differing only in degree, not in basic principle, limited only by the accidents of tradition, of chaos, of bloody strife and periodic collapse"<sup>44</sup>. However, this statement does not lead Rand to anarchocapitalist views. Although she was a supporter of the minimal state, she assumed that the state as the only institution should have a monopoly on enforcing violence and lawmaking. The state apparatus, in her view, should guarantee both internal and external security to all citizens, however, the taxation of citizens should be voluntary<sup>45</sup>. The biggest problem is

<sup>42</sup> A. Rand, *For the New...*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>43</sup> A. Rand, *The Fountainhead*, New York 1971, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue...*, p. 88.

<sup>45</sup> T. Teluk, *Libertarianizm. Teoria państwa* [Eng. *Libertarianism. A theory of a state*], Warszawa 2006, p. 82.



not just the existence of the state, but rather its condition when it is overly expanded, too centralized, and more forms of interventionism increasingly restrict the rights and freedoms of the individual, as well as the freedom to decide about the created goods. In *Capitalism. The Unknown Ideal*, Rand emphasizes that “a government is the means of placing the retaliatory use of physical force under objective control – *i.e.*, under objectively defined laws”<sup>46</sup>. The function of the state in Rand’s libertarian vision is therefore quite significant. However, it must be remembered that the state and elites of power are by their nature prone to wastefulness and the desire to expand their structures unless they are effectively controlled by citizens. Rand points out that

Rome fell, bankrupted by statist controls and taxation, while its emperors were building coliseums. Louis XIV of France taxed his people into a state of indigence, while he built the palace of Versailles, for his contemporary monarchs to envy and for modern tourists to visit<sup>47</sup>.

That is why she calls for a revolution at the political level, which will result in a radical reconstruction of the state according to the idea of a minimal state.

Rand is aware that a radical reconstruction of the state will not be possible without a revolution. The modern sophisticated centralized state has led to the emergence of a number of interest groups that use state tools to realize their own particular goals. Neither of these groups will be interested in either limiting their ability to act unrestrictedly or especially giving up their dominance. Only a revolution which can be indirectly provoked by creators retreating from public life can result in breakdown of such organized state structures. It is only in their debris that a new minimal state can be formed. Rand argues that “in a proper society, the government is the servant of the citizens, not their ruler” and that “in a rational society, individuals agree to delegate their right of self-defense; they renounce the private use of physical force even in self-protection”<sup>48</sup>. Rand’s new state is supposed to have a kind of agency that will have just one task. Justyna Miklaszewska emphasizes that “the purpose of libertarian utopia is primarily to protect the freedom of the individual and his property from the state”<sup>49</sup> – this is exactly how Rand imagined the state. Expanded modern states limit human freedom because “the world controlled by the spirit of statism is helpless and paralyzed”, as Ryszard Legutko points out<sup>50</sup>. A good state is to be a real “night watchman”, that is simply a guarantor and guardian of the fundamental rights of the individual. Only in such conditions can a man lead a true *vita activa* and bring forth his creativity and entrepreneurship in an unobstructed way. The extended state must be overthrown, as it has become ineffective and the more centralized it is, the less effective it is. Rand proved it by pointing out examples of East and West Berlin and citing the *casus* of Soviet centralism. She reminded that “after forty-five years of government planning, Russia is still unable to solve the problem of feeding her population”<sup>51</sup>, which is to prove that centralism and statism not only inhibit development, but also prevent people from fulfilling their most basic needs. Statists arouse huge expectations in people and build support for their views on the state and economy upon them. Legutko points out that “perfidy of the alliance of irrationalism and statism

<sup>46</sup> A. Rand, *Capitalism...*, p. 381.

<sup>47</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue...*, p. 85.

<sup>48</sup> L. Peikoff, *Objectivism...*, p. 363.

<sup>49</sup> J. Miklaszewska, *The Libertarian Utopia: Robert Nozick and Aleksander Świątchowski*, “Reports on Philosophy” 1989/13, p. 52.

<sup>50</sup> R. Legutko, *Spory...*, p. 131.

<sup>51</sup> A. Rand, *The Virtue...*, p. 83.

consists in the fact that they fuel the hope of man to subordinate reality to his whimsical desires, and then exploit that hope by making him defenseless against whimsical desires of other people”<sup>52</sup>. In fact, modern states make people dependent on one another and on state institutions, causing people to lose their ability to act independently and rationally. So Rand has no doubt that a radical change is necessary, with the result of overthrowing old states and building a minimalist state from scratch.

## 6. Aspect 5: Economic revolution

In Rand’s concept, revolution at the economic level is based on her desire to build a truly capitalist economic order. The author of *Atlas Shrugged* is aware that so far such a perfectly capitalist society has not existed. She emphasizes that Western economies in the era of the great industrial revolution resembled such ideal capitalism to a large extent, yet they were not an example of model capitalism anyway. Legutko writes about Rand as the author of “novels and philosophical essays glorifying free-trade capitalism in an extremely aggressive and intrusive manner”<sup>53</sup>. And indeed it was so: Rand considered herself a pro-capitalist militant, all her social and journalistic activity was subordinate to the idea of free market, and a number of her publications directly called for a systemic revolution during which the so-called mixed economy would be overthrown. One of her closest collaborators, Nathaniel Branden, stressed, in line with Rand’s conclusions – that “the free market does not permit inefficiency or stagnation”<sup>54</sup>. A truly free market economy will therefore be a growth-enhancing and modernizing economy. Rand, however, does not justify her belief of the necessity of organizing a capitalist revolution by utilitarian reasons. She emphasizes that her belief in free market mechanisms and the capitalist system has its rational and ethical justification. It is the market – in her view – that is the most perfect tool by which “fair evaluation and pricing of human behavior” can be made<sup>55</sup>. All other economic systems, which are actually camouflaged forms of socialism, are in fact unjust and result in injustice in the treatment of individuals who participate in social and economic relations. Thus Rand’s capitalist revolution is also a kind of moral revolution which is to result in the restoration – or creation – of justice in interpersonal relationships<sup>56</sup>. In his study *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, Leonard Peikoff points out that “justice is the virtue of judging men morally and of granting to each that which he deserves”<sup>57</sup>. Therefore, only in a truly free market economy is it possible to honestly judge every human being. In all of Rand’s works one can notice a deep conviction that “there can be no other form of social organization outside the free market which would render justice to reality and closely follow the principle of identity”<sup>58</sup>. These are undoubtedly manifestations of the classic concept of justice, which assumed that justice consists in giving everyone what they rightfully deserve. Free-market mechanisms – particularly the mechanism of supply and demand and, as a consequence, the mechanism of price formation – are therefore a specific form of implementation of the principle of justice in economic and social relations. Undoubtedly, that was exactly what Adam Smith thought when he considered the existence of a free market economy of the kind of ideal type.

<sup>52</sup> R. Legutko, *Spory...*, p. 136.

<sup>53</sup> R. Legutko, *Spory...*, p. 128.

<sup>54</sup> N. Branden, *Common Fallacies about Capitalism*, in: A. Rand, *Capitalism...*, p. 76.

<sup>55</sup> J. Bartyzel, *W gąszczu...*, p. 147.

<sup>56</sup> Ch.M. Sciabarra, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*, University Park 1995, p. 244.

<sup>57</sup> L. Peikoff, *Objectivism...*, p. 384.

<sup>58</sup> R. Legutko, *Spory...*, p. 140.

Zbigniew Rau, an outstanding Polish political thinker, concludes that for Rand free market is the only and real “reflection of the logic of the world”<sup>59</sup>. Therefore, the capitalist revolution proposed by the author of *Virtue of Selfishness* is eventually supposed to bring back objective order, or order consistent with the nature of things in the world. Legutko – in a similar vein – points out that Rand interprets “the free market as a pure order of reason, order whose real existence is only an imperfect approximation”<sup>60</sup>. The capitalist economy would be the supreme socioeconomic form of the ultimate order of reason. Consequently, it is not surprising that some scholars and commentators interpret her concepts as a libertarian or capitalist utopia. The idea of an ideally capitalist economy also seems to co-exist perfectly with the anthropological individualism we find in Rand’s thought. Legutko accuses her of adopting utopian anthropology, according to which all men are “possessed with the desire for self-fulfillment”<sup>61</sup> and this desire may be fully realized in unfettered capitalist economy. Rand, of course, is aware that not every person is “possessed” with this desire, but she is convinced that everyone is equipped with a natural eagerness for self-realization, which in most cases is lessened under the conditions of a socialist economy and a centralized, over-protective state. As commentators indicate, “later she shifted into portraying the positive aspects of the American system, focusing on what she identified as the intrinsic moral nature of capitalism”<sup>62</sup>. Regardless of shortcomings in the US political and economic system that Rand perceived, she nevertheless realized that it was much fairer and better organized than the European system. So if we talk about the moral nature of capitalism, it undoubtedly materialized in the United States to an extent incomparably greater than in European countries. In her opinion, there is no question of any “golden mean”, and any attempt to build a “third way” between socialism and capitalism must come to naught. She argued that “there are only two possible societies: where men work for *reward* or where men work from *fear* – *the incentive of joy or incentive of suffering*. These are basic, because man has, essentially, only the two sensations: pleasure and pain”<sup>63</sup>. Human action can therefore be motivated by suffering or pleasure, fear or reward. Only capitalism makes people fully capable of pursuing pleasure and reward. Moreover, “a free mind is a corollary of a free market”<sup>64</sup>, so, only a free market provides fullness of personal freedoms. And as free market advocates argue, “in order to survive, man has to discover and produce everything he needs, which means that he has to *alter* his background and adapt it to his needs (...) his well-being depends on his success at production”<sup>65</sup>. A truly free economy will in effect provide man with real well-being. The capitalist revolution must therefore completely release economic mechanisms from any influence, especially from the influence of state instruments. Peikoff shows that “under capitalism, state and economics are separated just as state and church are separated and for the same reason”<sup>66</sup>. The capitalist revolution is therefore a triumph of reason, so it remains in deep connection with what might be described as a rationalist or anti-irrationalist revolution.

<sup>59</sup> Z. Rau, *Liberalizm...*, p. 176.

<sup>60</sup> R. Legutko, *Spory...*, p. 120.

<sup>61</sup> R. Legutko, *Spory...*, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> J. Burns, *Godless...*, p. 364.

<sup>63</sup> D. Harriman (ed.), *Journals of Ayn Rand*, New York 1999, p. 613.

<sup>64</sup> L. Peikoff, *Objectivism...*, p. 381.

<sup>65</sup> A. Rand, *Return...*, p. 278. See also: Ch. Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom*, Oxford 2003.

<sup>66</sup> L. Peikoff, *Objectivism...*, p. 380.

## 7. Conclusion: Ayn Rand as a philosopher of radical change

The most famous biography of Ayn Rand by Barbara Branden says that “everything about her life and her person was of an epic scale. Her seventy-seven years encompassed the outer limits of triumph and defeat, of exaltation and tragedy, of passionate love and intransigent hatred, of dedicated effort and despairing passivity”<sup>67</sup>. This very introduction makes the reader perceive the thinker as both an interesting and intriguing character. And she was one, indeed. However, her philosophical and theoretical, political and economic concepts were also significant to those who read her works or watched her activity in journalism and popularization. In a study on Rand’s objectivity, Leonard Peikoff indicates that her “philosophy has changed thousands of lives, including my own, and has the power to change the course of history. Her views, however, are spread across more than a dozen books and hundreds of articles and speeches”<sup>68</sup>. So Peikoff’s conclusions confirm that Rand’s ideas were – and in fact still are – very influential. There can be no doubt that the uniqueness of this thought was *volens volens* guaranteed by the enormous amount of revolutionary or radically subversive content. Of course, Rand’s revolutionism should not be equated with proposals of a strong takeover of state power by a narrow group of her followers. Rand never had such ideas, and she would surely laugh at the very suggestions of that kind. As it has already been shown in this text, radicalism of her concept was based on a total redevelopment of thinking about man and his place in the world (anthropological aspect of Rand’s revolution), as well as the mentality of modern man (anti-mystical aspect), about society and its hierarchies (social aspect), state system (political aspect), the economic system and relations between the entities operating within the free market (economic aspect). Rand’s project is by no means a project of reforms, it is a project of building a new man, society, state and economy. Of course, quite rightly many researchers of her thought point to the utopianism of this project, for some it is only a theoretical construct or simply a specific type of ideal. It seems, however, that the strike of the most outstanding individuals, as described in *Atlas Shrugged*, could have been treated as a real scenario by her. If so, then this thought can be referred to as revolutionary, in other words: radically subversive.

<sup>67</sup> B. Branden, *The Passion...*, p. IX.

<sup>68</sup> L. Peikoff, *Objectivism...*, p. XIII.

### The Revolutionary Political Philosophy of Ayn Rand

**Abstract:** Ayn Rand is generally considered a libertarian, although she never claimed to belong to this movement. Undoubtedly, she was best known for promoting liberal and capitalist ideas. The author of this paper argues that Rand’s philosophical and political concepts can be described as revolutionary. The purpose of this text is to prove it by pointing to the manifestations of revolutionism in Rand’s works, ideas and concepts. The author distinguishes five different aspects through which her revolutionism is expressed. These are: (1) the anti-mystical aspect; (2) the anthropological aspect; (3) the social aspect; (4) the political aspect, and (5) the economic aspect. Such wide-ranging revolutionism makes some researchers and commentators recognize Rand’s thought as a manifestation of utopian thinking.

**Keywords:** objectivism, libertarianism, philosophy of politics, liberalism, revolutionism

## BIBLIOGRAFIA / REFERENCES:

- Bartyzel J. (2012). *W gąszczu liberalizmów. Próba periodyzacji i klasyfikacji*. Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej Fundacja Servire Veritati.
- Branden B. (1986). *The Passion of Ayn Rand*. Garden City (NY): Doubleday.
- Burns J. (2004). Godless capitalism: Ayn Rand and the conservative movement. *Modern Intellectual History* 1, 359-385.
- Burns J. (2009). *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Calvert P.A.R. (1967). Revolution: the Politics of Violence. *Political Studies* 1, 1-11.
- Campbell R.L. (2006). Altruism in August Comte and Ayn Rand. *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 2, 357–369.
- Gladstein M.R. (1999). *The New Ayn Rand Companion*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Gotthelf J., Salmieri, G. (2016). *A Companion to Ayn Rand*. Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell/
- Harriman D. (ed.). (1999). *Journals of Ayn Rand*. New York: Dutton.
- Kukathas C. (2003). *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lasswell H., Kaplan, A. (1950). *Power and Society*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Legutko R. (1994). *Spory o kapitalizm*. Kraków: Znak.
- Maurone J. (2002). The Trickster Icon and Objectivism. *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 2, 229-258.
- Merill R.E., Familiaro Enright, M. (2013). *Ayn Rand Explained*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Miklaszewska J. (1989). The Libertarian Utopia: Robert Nozick and Aleksander Świętochowski. *Reports on Philosophy* 13, 51-60.
- Nozick R. (1971). On the Randian Argument. *The Personalist* 52, 282-304.
- Peikoff L. (1993). *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*. New York: Meridian.
- Rand A. (1964). *The Virtue of Selfishness. A New Concept of Egoism*. New York: New American Library.
- Rand A. (1967). *Capitalism. The Unknown Ideal*. New York: New American Library.
- Rand A. (1968). *For the New Intellectual*. New York: Random House.
- Rand A. (1971). *The Fountainhead*. New York: Bobbs Merrill.
- Rand A. (1975). *The Romantic Manifesto. A Philosophy of Literature*. New York: New American Library.
- Rand A. (1984). *Philosophy: Who Needs It*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Rand A. (1996). *Atlas Shrugged*. New York: Random House.
- Rand A. (1999). *Return of Primitive. The Anti-Industrial Revolution*. New York: New American Library.

- Rau Z. (2000). *Liberalizm. Zarys myśli politycznej XIX i XX wieku*. Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia.
- Sciabarra C.M. (1995). *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*. University Park, Penn State University Press.
- Seddon F. (2003). *Ayn Rand, Objectivists, and the History of Philosophy*. Lanham: UPA.
- Teluk, T. (2006). *Libertarianizm. Teoria państwa*. Warszawa: Biblioteka Wolności.
- Teluk, T. (2009). *Libertarianizm. Krytyka*. Gliwice–Warszawa: Instytut Globalizacji.
- de Tocqueville, A. (1955). *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Weiss, G. (2012). *Ayn Rand Nation: The Hidden Struggle for America's Soul*. New York: St. Martin's Press.