

Thesis Synopsis:

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Thesis Project: "Man as a Heroic Being in Ayn Rand's Philosophical Literature"

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Ayn Rand is a Russian-American existentialist philosopher born on February 2nd, 1905 in St. Petersburg, Russia. She was one of the major proponents of 20th century existentialism, concerned with the purpose of human existence. Rand's interest is to create a philosophy for living on earth, grounded in reality, and aimed at defining human nature and the nature of the world in which we live. She conceptualises the human existence as being purposeful and the human person as a being with purpose. She asserts that the moral purpose of life is the pursuit of self- happiness and actualisation.

Rand conceives the society as being degradative of the human person. Thus, in the bid to oppose the degradation of the human person and to propose a system in which the human person can promote its actualization, she develops a philosophy which is about a Heroic being, whose life she argues, is the ideal for any human life. She discusses this heroic being as a being with a unique manner of living that fosters its actualization. With this idea, Rand distinguishes between two opposite types of humans: the Passive individual and the Active individual. The Passive individual is the **Second-hander**, while the Active individual is the **Heroic being**, and for Rand each human person ought to live as a heroic being so as to break away from any sort of degradation. Therefore, this work is

an assessment of Rand's Heroic being. It examines Rand's view of the two natures: second hander and heroic being, and how they affect human actualization.

For Rand, the second-hander is an inauthentic person who wishes to be given directives, and who submits or conforms to any utterance. The second-hander is a product of the effects of the degradation of the human person. Rand warns against living in this mode of existence, for it is living without any sense of purpose. Rand asserts that the heroic being is an authentic being, one who lives for the self and by the self, and is able to stand alone. The heroic being is an egoist in the absolute sense, one with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute. The heroic being is an individualist who does not believe in self-sacrifice or selfless service as a way of life, but holds his or her rights and choices as prerogative and absolutely for self-aggrandizement. Thus, Rand holds that heroic being is a life of individualism and egoism.

Rand's view above has not being without responses and reactions. Tibor Machan, for instance, in his work, "Classical Individualism: The Supreme Importance of Each Human Being" (2005), holds that Rand's position inspires in the human person the motivation to live his or her own life and not a borrowed life. But David Kotter in his article "Check Your Premises: Ayn Rand through a Biblical Lens" (2012), expresses that Rand's overemphasis on the person loses accordance with natural existence because nature orders things in family ties and places on each thing the responsibility of preserving its family. By this fact, Kotter reveals that there is some bit of relationship that is expected of a human person instead of the individualism that Rand is proposing.

Nevertheless, I understand that in the heroic being, Rand proposes an instance of a human life with a purpose and for a purpose, an authentic existence. Thus, there are some relevant inferences that could be drawn from Rand's heroic being. Rand's heroic being suggests that the human person is a self-fulfilling or self-actualizing being and not a slave or convict who satisfies the

desires of his or her master. Thus, the person's endeavour should be geared towards attaining this result. More so, Rand's position rescinds all forms of imposing extremist ideologies, such as culturism, religionism and normism, of the society that jails people's free existence.

Nonetheless, I also realised that tied to the relevance of the heroic being is a minute flaw which poses danger. This flaw rests on the sense which Rand's arguments raise: the sense of individualism and egoism. Rand's heroic being in this sense is an ideal of selfishness, one that does not even consider other persons unless it is for self-interest; that is, when one stands to gain from that relationship. This position suggests alienation of the human person from the community of others, hence, encouraging aloneness for the human person. The fact that there is a flaw tied to Rand's relevant idea of being heroic suggests a missing link that should make the idea more appropriate. The missing idea that is needed to correct the flaw in Rand's heroic being is better expressed in terms of communication and participation. These two terms suggest that in the task of human actualisation, the attention is not on self-actualisation but on the actualisation of the totality of humans. Thus, the human person is not to seek only its self-happiness but should also communicate and participate in the actualisation of others by opening oneself to others so that in the end the actualisation of the totality of beings (humanity) is the purpose of human existence.

In conclusion, like Rand, I agree that humans are purposeful beings, and are meant to realise and actualise their purpose. This means putting to use all that humanity is endowed with for the good of all humanity. Yet, unlike Rand, I do not agree with the actualisation of self-happiness alone. Rather, I stand by the position that self-actualisation should translate into and foster the actualisation of the totality of all human beings (humanity) so that instead of our human acts to be guided by egoism which Rand suggests there will be the enthronement of self-transcending love which evokes concern for both the self and also for others' actualisation and happiness.