

## AYN RAND'S AND ANTONIO GRAMSCI'S THEORIES ON SOCIAL RELATIONS OF POWER—DISCUSSING THE SIMILARITIES

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**Abstract:** *This paper focuses on the methodological similarities between Antonio Gramsci and Ayn Rand in their interpretation of social relations of power. Libertarianism and Marxism are considered to be mutually exclusive, because of how the political spectrum is polarized. In his book Marx, Hayek, And Utopia (1995), Chris Matthew Sciabarra questions whether these ideologies really are mutually exclusive, positing that both Marx and Hayek, despite their differences, coalesce in the use of dialectics. Following the same logic, this paper attempts to shed light on a number of ways in which Rand and Gramsci crisscross—despite distinction in emphasis—in their interpretation of social relations of power.*

**Keywords:** Marxism; Libertarianism; dialectics

### **Empiricism and Rationalism: Randian and Gramscian Variants**

There is a striking resemblance between Gramsci and Rand with regard to their negation of empiricism and rationalism with a distinction in emphasis. Gramsci, being a Marxist theorist, harangues against one-dimensional consideration of one on the expense of the other which gives rise to the duality between the masses and the vanguard of the revolutionary party; hence, for Gramsci, it is an issue of politics. Gramsci blames empiricism for castrating the Marxist politics by singularly emphasizing on 'spontaneity' and rationalism for turning the Marxist politics into dictatorial and tyrannical by disproportionate stress on 'elitism'. The tendency to conform the reality to "an *apriori* schema" of the party vanguard is called rationalism or elitism (Femia, 1981, p. 161). As against rationalism, empiricism shifts the pendulum toward pure practice on the ground delivered from any guidance from the theory. Generally, the Marxists tend to denounce, which Gramsci concurs, the establishment of "doctrinaire truth" which is "valid for all time" (p. 161). The principles of the philosophy of praxis have to take account of the practice on ground in order to "succeed in enjoying a certain popularity" (p. 162). Gramsci assigns "[t]he party theoreticians" to transport the praxis "into [the] theoretical language" which would be an attempt at establishing healthy reciprocity and dialectics between empiricism and rationalism (p. 161).

Where Gramsci's criticism of the duality is situated mainly in the sphere of politics, Rand debunks the same on the epistemological grounds. Rand has introduced two separate terms---one mocks empiricism and the other rationalism---which are 'Attila' and the 'Witch Doctor': the former's method of dealing with the reality is range-of-the-moment drifting; and the latter's method comprises floating abstractions untied to praxis. What differentiates man from animals is his capability to transcend "moment by moment" (Rand, 1961, p. 12) life of the latter---thanks to man's innate potential for concept-formation which enables him to plan his life and think long-range. Evasion from

cognition and the concomitant failure at concept-formation is typical of both Attila and Witch Doctor which deprives them of survival on their own. The dictum “nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed” is pithy in the sense that it carries subsumed in it the law of causality and the law of identity. The observance of both the laws hinges primarily on the use of reason as the tool of cognition: with reason, definitionally, standing as the faculty that “perceives, identifies and integrates the material provided by man’s senses” (Rand, 1982, p. 85). Because Attila epistemologically cohabitates with animals, he impersonates the same animalistic, savage demeanor in his interactions with other men: the interactions are well-neighbor built on the primitive logic of master and slave. Attila dispenses with the need for abstraction by taking “bigger muscles, bigger clubs [...] [and] bigger gang” as the inevitables of survival (Rand, 1961, p. 12). This aversion of Attila for abstraction gains impetus from empiricism: the philosophical orientation that has remained the bane of human epistemological efficacy.

The Witch Doctor appears to be the opposite of Attila but, in effect, he is not. Detachment from the empirical world is idiosyncratic of the Witch Doctor: he relishes in the realm of ideas. Unlike Attila who has urges as his tools of cognition, the Witch Doctor holds “emotions” as his “tools of cognition” (p. 13). On Rand’s philosophy, emotions are not per se looked down upon. Rand defines emotions as “lightening-like estimates of the things around you, calculated according to your values” (Rand, 1982, pp. 7-8). By first projecting human mind as analogous to computer in functionality, Rand posits that ideal men, like John Galt, programme their mind consciously and know the base, or value, from where a particular emotion is arising. On the contrary, the Witch Doctor, with rationalistic philosophical leanings, constructs his “knowledge of the world [...] exclusively from the concepts, which come from inside his head” (p. 112). Rather than physically conquering others like Attila, the Witch Doctor, as Rand says, “pre-empt[s] the field of *morality*” by claiming to be possessing a special faculty which affords them access to the “‘superior’ truth [...] denied to other, ‘inferior’, beings” (Rand, 1961, p. 13). This amounts to the elaboration of values by counting reality and reason out of the equation.

Apart from unanimity in confuting the duality---an undialectical epistemological orientation---of empiricism and rationalism, Gramsci and Rand explain the alliance between Attila and the Witch Doctor with marked methodological affinity, though not to forget the distinction in emphasis. Gramscian Attila is the exploitative politician and the character of the Witch Doctor is played by the traditional intellectuals of the bourgeois order. Gramsci scolds the traditional intellectuals over their inability to “feel” about the aspirations, miseries and confusions of “[t]he popular element” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 418). Rather than studying ethnographically the subaltern phenomenon, the traditional intellectuals opt for the method which, Gramsci terms as pedantic, provides for the accumulation of knowledge and that also without being transfused by “feeling” or passion either about the “knowledge in itself” or about the “object of knowledge”(p. 418). It is in such situations where the dominant philosophy, as outlined by the traditional intellectuals, and the “‘feelings’” of the masses are placed in the relationship of “externality” (Patnaik, 1988, p. 4), that the Gramscian Attila and the Witch Doctor flourish. Croce emerges as the archetypal Witch Doctor as he dangled fantastic utopias through his philosophy of idealism when the common element was miserably entrenched in impoverishment and misery. Rather than translating the praxis into philosophical language, Croce short-changed the wretched with unattainable escapes through his philosophy. This afforded the Attila of Croce’s time incessant clout over the governmental machinery of the Italy of that time.

Rand’s magnum opus, *Atlas Shrugged*, is a fictional disquisition on the theme of despotic politicians and their incompetent corporate agents, or Attilas, and traditional intellectuals, or the Witch Doctors, joining hands to ensure that their reign remains operational without resistance from the oppressed. The important philosophical streak in the novel to which the Witch Doctors recurrently

resort to, makes claims to the effect that meaning is closed on men. The representative of this streak is Dr. Pritchett, the head of Philosophy Department at the Patrick Henry University, who states that the “insistence of man upon meaning” is the tendency which must be regarded as the causal agent of all his problems (Rand, 1957, p. 127). He takes issues with the philosophies of past over their pliable stance in reference to the question of meaning. He contends that “[t]he purpose of philosophy is [...] to prove to [...] [men] that there isn’t any [meaning in life]”. In addition to shunning all efforts aimed at meaning-making, another purpose of philosophy is to convince man that “he is of no importance whatever in the vast scheme of the universe” (p. 127). The feeling of worthlessness inflicts on man pessimistic sense of life which is detrimental to his self-esteem. Dr. Pritchett, as the philosophical spearhead of his age, decrees that reason is “the most naive of all superstitions”; that “knowledge is impossible to man” (p. 128). The philosophy built on the negation of the faculty of reason which facilitates the accumulation of knowledge and its corollary production, is bound to promote epistemological impotency and its corollary the leeches and parasites. Rather than informing theory with praxis and directing efforts at revamping it, the Witch Doctors cast the reality in the shape of their philosophical constructs. When such is the philosophical zeitgeist, the logical outcome is the flourishing of the Attila whose all wrongdoings, brutalities and humiliations of the subaltern are ontological inevitables.

The philosophical lore of traditional intellectuals, whose leitmotif is romance with suffering, reverberates in literature as well. Since the literature of past portrayed the ideal man; concerned itself with the issues of “morality”; promoted the trend of “happy endings” in all its genres, it did not sit right with Balph Eubank, “the literary leader of the age” because of his doctrinaire ratiocination. His doctrine opinionates that the *raison d’être* of man is to undergo “[d]efeat and suffering”. Literature has to induct the essence of man’s life as its subject matter, on Eubank’s philosophy. The fact that the literature of the past celebrated accomplishment and coherence, transpires the spectacle of literary personages surrendering to “material greed”, according to Eubank (p. 128).

For Rand, the plot “is a purposeful progression of events” where the events are arranged in such a structured way that each comes out as sprouting from the preceding and “all leading up to a final climax” (Rand, 2000, p. 21). The way Rand considers life as naturally patterned, in the same way she advocates fiction as strongly plotted. In an effort to keep the *esprit de corps* of the Witch Doctors intact on the literary plane, Eubank categorically denounces plot as “primitive vulgarity in literature” (Rand, 1957, p. 129). Because the plot lays out a blueprint that the novel is obliged to follow, Eubank, whose philosophy perceives life as fluid and contradiction, is predisposed to loath the prospect of elaborate design and logical direction, which the plot is. The condemnation of plot in novel simulates the same aversion that the Witch Doctor’s philosophy carries for pattern and design in reality. The conception of reality as unpatterned and undesigned serves the Witch Doctor’s desire targeting willful exnomination of Attila from the predicaments undercutting the survival of the common element qua human.

As a traditional intellectual of the dominant order, Balph Eubank has “[f]rustration” as the plot-theme of his upcoming novel which he will dedicate to Lillian---another character in the novel of his clique---, the wife of Hank Rearden. Does he give fictional rendering to ‘frustration’ as caused by Attila or as ontologically determined essence of man’s life? Had he based his plot-theme on the cause-and-effect logic of the former, he would have emerged as an organic intellectual. The novel, then, would have worked as instrumental in unraveling the real cause of miseries of the subalterns; in addition to that, Eubank’s interlocution with the audience would have been educative and directive: two of the most important tasks of organic intellectuals. But he projected the latter causal connection

which turned him into a Witch Doctor scapegoating ontology---for Attila's wrongdoings--- which is depicted as having 'frustration' as its fundamental axiom.

### **The Theory of Hegemony: Another Sight of Agreement between Gramsci and Rand**

Philosophical outlook has far-reaching consequences for the conception of the world and prescribes political strategies for transforming it. Positivism, as a philosophical doctrine, regards society as a "natural organism' ruled by fixed laws" (Urbinati, 1998, p. 372). In other words, the society, on Positivist logic, is a domain of necessity expecting only a passive complicity on the part of the individual. Whereas, Idealist Marxism, as a philosophical counterpart to Positivism, proposes the dialectical unity between being and knowledge, between historicity and philosophy and between body and mind. In effect, its theory of society stipulates traversing a passage from necessity to freedom which is possible only when the "general principles and local knowledge" touch in reciprocity (p. 380). The dialectical unity drives the factor of necessity out of the equation by neither requiring blind affirmation to deductively-borne "imposition of new principles" nor letting empirically-borne submissive drifting "in things as they are" to set in (p. 380).

Gramsci lays out a plan by which relationship of such nature can be built: whereby, "the leader and the led, the ruler and the ruled, are obliged to partake in a relationship whose modus operandi is the transportation of "feeling-passion" viz., the sentiments of the masses into "knowledge" viz., the political and philosophical principles (Gramsci, 1971, p. 418). For Gramsci, the existence of master and slave relationship plagues the dialectics inevitable for human emancipation; whereas, Rand's reservations on the master and slave duality draw mainly from the damages incurred by individual's epistemology at its hands. Both the thinkers are dismissive of undialectical and one-sided, exploitative relationships but with a distinction in emphasis: where Rand's emphasis is on epistemology, there Gramsci's is on politics.

Rand delineates a detailed account as to what constitutes the relational duality in which one is dominant and the other subservient. Rand has coined two separate categories, which are: the second-hander and the prime movers, to explain the phenomenon. Second-hander is defined as "hav[ing] no self" (Rand, 2000, p. 54). All the beliefs, ideas and convictions of a second-hander are given to him by others and the only source of his contention is the belief that others certify his possessions. In case if he happens to be in possession of something and others do not attest that, he concludes as not possessing it; hence, he becomes a second-hander as all the constitutive elements of his personality bank on others' attestation for existence. This otherness of the second-hander is the outcome of short-circuited epistemological patterns.

On Rand's epistemology, the processes of abstraction from the concretes and the subsequent integration are two cardinal steps for knowledge production but the second-hander, whose primary sources of knowledge accumulation are "sundry concretes, random facts and unidentified feelings" blanks out on both of them and thence becomes an embodiment of anti-conceptual mentality (Rand, 1982, p. 53). Concept-formation necessitates maintaining hold of "a long [...] chain" of abstractions coherently and sequentially subsumed under the concept, the task which is well-nigh impossible for the anti-conceptual mentality whose is epistemologically stuck at the "first, rudimentary" level of perception (p. 54). His only means of knowledge retrieval are "his village or town or gang" (p. 55). His epistemological methodology destines him to be a frog in the well: with the well comprised only of his tribe.

The biggest fear of an anti-conceptual mentality is the prospect of encountering the outsiders: where the outsiders are the independent Randian ideal man whose existence does not require sanction or approval of others. The only factor consequential in the evaluation of any phenomenon by the ideal man is its relevance and benefit to the self. Randian ethics command that the agent of an action "must

always be the beneficiary of his action” (Rand, 1962, p. 7). Rand calls her morality as the morality of selfishness: with selfishness standing for “concern with one’s own interests” and by no stretch of imagination propping up “irrational emotions, feelings, urges, wishes or whims” (p. 7). Randian ideal man ‘live[s] for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself’ (p. 19). What enables the prime mover to dispose of the demand of sacrifice from relations is his efficacy in dealing with the existence for which his knowledge---which is the product of his concept-formation capability---must be credited. It is customary of the second-handers to despise the man of independence since his presence forces him to come face-to-face with his incompetence which is the effect of the reign of *zero* on his epistemological plane. The sustenance of the second-hander’s anti-conceptual mentality and its corollary tribalism warrants the sacrifice of independent minds which he achieves with the collaboration of morality. Rand forewarns against such moral codes by saying that any “man who speaks [...] of sacrifice [germinating from morality], speaks of slaves and masters”: with eyeing for himself the role of the master (Rand, 2000, p. 58).

The majority of *Atlas Shrugged’s* characters bask ignorantly in their second-handedness. Hank Rearden’s brother, Philip, is a second-hander of the highest order. Despite parasiting on the wealth of Rearden, he harbours extreme animosity for him because of the reason that his tribalistic second-handedness does not normatively hold in the face of the farmer’s independence. Over Bertram Scudder’s tacit insinuation as to his possible “lik[ing] [...] or not” of the Equalization of Opportunity Bill because the stipulations of the bill are going to hit his brother Rearden hard. The retort---“[w]hat made you think that I did not like it, Mr. Scudder?”---confirms Philip’s unwavering allegiance to the doctrine of second-handedness: which entails destruction of the very forces on whose products its followers existence literally depends (p. 130). He is ready to endanger his basic survival, bankrolled singularly by Rearden, to ensure that his doctrine remains protected from the defiance of the prime movers. To sum the argument up, it is the stunted state of Philip’s epistemology which predisposes him to cling to the tribal moors which, on their part, demand from him stringent reprisal in the wake of discretion manifested by the independents like Rearden. Hence, indulgence in master and slave relations is embedded in the structure of the tribal code.

Lillian follows Phillip’s suit and does not fall short in practicing second-handedness. Since she is tied to Rearden in a connubial relation, the only torment she could subject him to, is that of depriving him of the warmth which is typical of the erotic episodes indulged in by the partners. Her torment does not consist in “object[ing]” or “refusing” to Rearden’s desire for intercourse but by “becom[ing] an inanimate object turned over to her husband’s use” (p. 153). By puritanically observing the Witch Doctor’s philosophy, Lillian has turned herself into a wretched creature incapable of experiencing happiness. On Rand’s philosophy, happiness is cognitive state which “proceeds from the achievement of one’s values” (Rand, 1962, p. 19) which Lillian is unable to experience, thanks to her second-handedness. Even Rearden is an informant to the audience of her penchant for remaining confined only “to her own circle of friends” which includes James Taggart, Betty Pope, Bertram Scudder and Balph Eubank, among others (Rand, 1957, p. 154). Again, it is Lillian’s anti-conceptual mentality which makes her seek shelter in a tribe whose only mode of interpersonal interaction with people outside of the tribe is that of master and slave. Admitted that Lillian’s body “held no shred of joy or meaning” for Rearden, it still wielded attraction to the extent that Rearden’s desire for its seizure was relentless: for which he repeatedly cursed himself (p. 153). This put Rearden at Lillian’s disposal who preyed on it with both hands and became master of Rearden who, in turn, became her slave for time being.

James Taggart is another character subscribing to second-handedness. He resorts to invectives like “ruthless” and “conceited bitch” for Dagny while complaining about her principled consistency

(p. 361). The part and parcel of Mr. Taggart's life is concern for others' opinions in reference to his ideas, actions and moves. His marriage with Cherryl Brooks, a poor shop girl, is directed toward his attempt at currying favor with his second-handed tribe since the marriage would sell, in the eyes of his fellow tribesmen, as a sympathetic gesture of an affluent toward the impoverished. His marriage with Brooks afforded him latter's "silent worship" arising out of "immense dept" (p. 360). Brooks was misguided by the towering status of Taggart Transcontinental in the market into presuming Jim as the creative atlas behind this. Throughout the novel, Jim can be seen as taking the undeserved credit which, in effect, ought to have gone toward Dagny Taggart, the real titan behind the success of Taggart Transcontinental. With the connivance of Orren Boyle, another second-hander, Jim succeeds in getting the rule entitled the Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule passed by the National Alliance of Railroads in a bid to ward the society off deadly competition. In the Witch Doctor's philosophical parlance, competition, greed, selfishness and capitalism are used interchangeably and denoting derogation of value for value mode of interpersonal interactions.

For Gramsci---whose principal motive as a Marxist theorist is to lay out a plan for cultural and political emancipation---the relationships of imposition viz., the relationships of master and slave, do not sit well. On the cultural plane, his strategy provides for the application or realization of a pithy aphorism, which is: "know thyself" (Urbinati, 1998, p. 381). To "know thyself" means to "learn to master oneself". It is only in the backdrop when the individuals are "self-mastering souls" that they forge "a dialectical relation with the outside world" which drives out the element of necessity or imposition. Knowing thyself means one is completely cognizant of one's position in the world which counts out the option of "anarchical rebellion". It is worthy of notice that Rand's second-handers badly fail in acting out the dictum "know thyself" as they are ill-equipped to either experience the world as the realm of freedom or hold a realistic assessment of their place in the world. Jim's incompetence in dealing with the outside world has Jim experience everything as necessity: his business, friendships, marriage and social work all are necessities. On the contrary, his sister, Dagny, has mastered the tact of dealing efficaciously with the outside world which renders everything for her as a sight of freedom: her business, friendships, romantic affairs all evince freedom and independence. Unacquainted with his position in the world---which, on rationality, must lie on the bottom of hierarchy---Jim, along with his cohort, pops up, time and again, with the reactionary rebellion of his own type by facilitating contrastive legislations which provide him with the opportunity to feign as atlas or creative giant on the spectrum of market and as altruist and collectivist on the spectrum of society. In fact, the Gramscian command to "know thyself" is a construction placed in the relationship of interchangeability with Randian construct of 'ideal or independent man'. If one turns "know thyself" into negative then it would be an exact definition of Rand's concept of second-handedness.

Gramsci's philosophical thought that the "[o]bjective always means 'humanly objective'": with humanly objective contingent upon "universal subjective" (Femia, 1981, p. 162), corresponds closely to Rand's conviction that "there are no conflicts of interests among rational men" (Rand, 1962, p. 35). Rand has stipulated "four interrelated considerations" as pre-requisitory for any factor of man's life to be 'universal subjective', which are : reality, context, responsibility and effort (p. 35). Rational man holds the "judgment of his mind", to the exclusion of all random wishes, whims and momentary cravings, as paramount in the evaluation of things. Randian ideal man has his mind as the province of rationality which ties all the cognitive chores, performed by him, to reality. As for context-keeping, the rational man does not lose track of the context by never for a moment dabbling in the context-dropping: a mental evasion entailing falling out on "the issues of range and of means" (p. 36). The range of rational man's goals is a lifetime and the achievement of his goals does not hinge upon the "wishful longing": an urge for the attainment of exquisite effects without sufficient

means (p. 36). The concept of responsibility, the third consideration, has undergone consistent evasion at the hands of the second-handers. The expression “[a] world I never made” plays in the hands of the second-handers as a sort of camouflage to hide all their evasions, wrongdoings and drifting (p. 37). As for effort, it is an offshoot of “‘humility metaphysics’ school” which theorizes the universe as “static” and all the values as causeless, requiring no effort. Shying away from considering any of the four factors would leave human subjectivities wildly riven, making the prospect of universal subjective---or humanly objective---an impossibility. Gramscian solution for either achieving or restoring the objective lies in the realization of the dictum “know thyself”, both on the individual, as dealt with above, as well as on the political levels. On the political level, Gramsci proffers indispensability of intellectuals, one of his key theoretical contributions, for the elevation of the consciousness of the masses to the level of elites. They make the subalterns realize that they apportion with the elites the same human essence; hence, they must strive to raise themselves to the level equal to that of the bourgeois with respect to “civil rights” (Urbinati, 1998, p. 381).

### **Conception of the World, Hegemony and Intellectuals: Rand and Gramsci**

Conception of the world is an informant on two fundamental elements of reality, which are: “understanding of the world and one’s place in it” (Wainwright, 2010, p. 507). The segments “practical, philosophical, relational and political” of man’s life, are the modes carrying the conception of the world since they reflect its fundamental axioms and their derivative components (p. 507). By contending the conception of the world as the driving force behind the apparently disparate factions of man’s life, Gramsci manifests consistency in his subscription to the dialectical methodology: whereby a particular phenomenon is looked at from different levels of generality and from different vantage points. Human beings have a knack for philosophy, a synonym for the term ‘conception of the world’, as evidenced by the presence of language, religion, literature, folklore and common sense since a certain view of the world and man’s position in it come packaged in all the mentioned ingredients of human society. While having in mind the length and breadth of the conception of the world in terms of its penetration into the institutions of human society, Rand, quite like Gramsci, has adopted “dialectical tools[...] throughout the structure of her philosophy” and “in the structure of her analysis of social problems” (Sciabarra, 2019, p. 26). Sciabarra has devised a separate model, that he calls the “Tri-Level Model of Social Relations” (p. 28) which is instrumental in grasping Rand’s evaluation of the dialectical interconnectedness among various components of the totality which secures for the primitive conceptions of the world---like parasitic altruism to say in Randian terms---opportunities to sustain. On level 1, Rand inventories a list of “‘individuals’ ethical, psychological, and ‘psycho-epistemological practices” (p. 29) which condition and simultaneously get conditioned by other components situated on other levels of generality. On level 2, which Sciabarra calls “the Cultural level of analysis”, Rand surveys the ideological, pedagogic, aesthetic and educational factors which buttress statism (p. 29). On the structural level, which is level 3 of Sciabarra’s model, Rand discusses statism from the vantage point of politics and economics that flow from, and flow into, the personal and cultural levels of generality. It is important to note that both Gramsci and Rand theorize the conception of the world, which ever it may be, as manifesting itself through all the elements of social totality; hence, their projects of social change are nothing save meta-narratives mandating the establishment of their respective stances in all the institutions of society.

In *Atlas Shrugged*, the philosophy of the Witch Doctors projects the universe, to say in the words of Dr. Pritchett, as “solid contradiction” (Rand, 1957, p. 128). Balph Eubank decrees that the man whose convictions embody the contradictory essence of the universe are men dwelling on “a higher plan [who] cannot be understood or appreciated” (p. 75). The Witch Doctor’s conception of

the world enforces such a catastrophic principled drudgery on its followers which they can neither practice nor drop out on. Since man is a nonentity in the scheme of things in the universe, he must avoid indulging in the productive work, on the practical level. Productive work is a logical outcome of knowledge and knowledge is built with the assistance of reason: which integrates the material provided by man's senses into concepts. Conditioned by the Witch Doctor's philosophy, the epistemological incompetence conditions man to leech, on the practical level, on the Randian ideal men who are the creator of values, for his survival. Rand condemns all "compassionate, 'humanitarian', altruistic, [and] collectivist" contours of the Witch Doctor's philosophy by calling them as "verbal rat-traps" (Rand, 1982, pp.161-3). This display of concern for the poor is a booby-trap containing the desire "to destroy the competent" which Rand christens as the "hatred of the good for being good" (p 163). The ideal men do not voluntarily consent the spectacle of parasites disposing of them; hence, the parasites indulge, on the relational plane, in the master and slave duality for which they need the connivance, on the political level, of the state. Jim's acknowledgement of Dagny and Rearden as the doyens of "material realm" which is inferior to the "spiritual" realm where he pretends superiority, is not a gesture of genuine affirmation but rather an attempt to create a straw man and then attack through the following allegations. "[T]hey're incapable of charity". They're not human. They feel no concern for anyone's need---or weakness" (Rand, 1957, p. 361). Jim asserts that all the above inabilities in the ideal man are born out of their superiority in the material realm. All the so-called inabilities associated with the ideal men are, in truth, "disguises" and "cover-ups" (Rand, 1982, p. 162) for the 'hatred of the good for being good'. With the Equality of the Opportunity Bill, Jim, aided by the governmental machinery, plans the destruction of Rearden's corporate superiority. With the Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule, he tries to out-compete Dan Conway, another Randian ideal man, in the railroad business. He complains about Conway's refusal to sell Taggart Transcontinental the Colorado track which has been put to operational extinctions, thanks the Anti-dog-eat-dog-Rule and its anti-competition credo. Conway, being a Randian hero, accepts the possibility of "selling it at a loss" than selling it to his destroyer (Rand, 1957, p. 166).

What is visible here is the dovetail where each element of the totality conditions, and gets conditioned by, other elements of the social totality. It must never be forgotten that the reciprocity between the elements is two-way. On the capsized pattern, all the succession can be seen as taking precedence: where statism, on the political level, assuming precedence for master and slave relations and master and slave relations preceding epistemological sloth and epistemological sloth preceding metaphysical summation of the universe as a contradictory flux.

According to Gramsci, philosophy, politics and economics "are the necessary constituents of the same conception of the world,[hence]there must necessarily be, in theoretical principles, a convertibility from one to the others" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 403). In *Atlas Shrugged*, the battle between the looters and the ideal man would have ended far earlier---with the ideal man as the winners--- had the necessary translation of principles of the same conception of the world, from one element into others, defined the conduct of Dagny Taggart and Hank Rearden. Rearden kept on producing Rearden Metal, to say in Francisco's words, for "enriching stray bastards who had the pull to rob" him because he held the contradictory premise: the premise that the principles of libertarian *economics* can live side-by-side with statist *politics* (Rand, 1957, p. 457). He could not, for a moment, bear taking liberties with the laws of identity and causality in the material, economic realm but felt "dreary" and "indifferent respect" for [...] [Lilian's] incapacity to enjoy physical pleasure (p. 153). Respect for an observant follower of the Witch Doctor's *philosophy* and an ardent application of edicts, in *economics*, emerging from a philosophy antagonistic to the former, is paradoxical on the part of Rearden. His conception of the world is enmeshed in contradictions: hence, a rarity of translations of

principles from one thread to another. On the other hand, Dagny, despite being on the verge of mental and physical melt-down, does not entertain the idea of leaving the world on the mercy of looters. She says, “[i]t seems monstrously wrong to surrender the world to the looters, and monstrously wrong to live under their rule” (p. 569). The indecision indicates Dagny’s fallibility in implicitly accepting the premise that libertarian-borne market and egalitarianism-borne politics can strike chord and coexist. Though she verbally admits that it is a contradiction, she refuses to throw the towel in and, consequently, fails in ensuring the prospect: where, her favored market principles are simulated in the political domain.

Gramsci defines philosophy as diffused throughout history in three strands, which are: “‘receptive’, ‘ordering’ and ‘creative’” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 346). The receptive strand imparts “certainty” regarding the immutability of the objective world and reduces man’s role to mere reception in the workings of the universe. Philosophy as ordering allows for a “narrow[ed] and limit[ed]” mental activity directed at the assemblage of things already per-determined in the schemata of the universe. Last but not least, Gramsci’s conception of philosophy as creative---bespeaking the credo of praxis---entails weeding out all the deterministic residues of the past from philosophy; it ties man and reality in an inseparable relation: whereby, the primitive notion that reality “exists on its own” gives way to the notion of reality “in an historical relationship with men who modify it” (p. 346). Rand holds the first two strands as descending into “grotesque spectacle” of despicable collage comprising “militant uncertainty, crusading cynicism [...], boastful self-abasement and self-righteous depravity” (Rand, 1961, p. 8). Man is the only creature gifted with the potential to adjust the reality according to the needs of his survival; on the contrary, from man’s counterparts, like the animals, survival requires that they conform to the demands of reality (p. 11). Man is conditioned by the very nature of his survival, as John Galt explains in his speech, “to act in the face of alternatives by means of *volitional choice*” (Rand, 1957, p. 927). The volitional choice entails man’s “choice to perceive existence or to evade it” with the former conferred moral propriety in Objectivism (Rand, 1982, p. 34). The perception of existence mandates investigation of “the characteristics or properties of the things that exist” which is pre-requisitory for the adjustment of the existence to man’s needs. Bacon’s aphorism “Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed” carries the crux of Rand’s conception of philosophy as creative: which theorizes man as the modifier of reality as against those of the receptor and the assembler. Nature to be obeyed means its components to be studied in the light of the law of identity and the law of causality: “the law of causality is the law of identity applied to action” (Rand, 1957, p. 949). Once man has culled information regarding the identities of “natural elements”, that man can assert his creative self: with creation standing for “bring[ing] into existence” novel “arrangement[s]”, “integrations” and “combinations” (Rand, 1982, p. 34). Rand has productiveness as one of the seven virtues of her Objectivist philosophy. In *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt defines productive work as “the process by which man’s consciousness controls his existence”; a process by which man renders concrete his ideas (Rand, 1957, p. 933). Galt distinguishes between creative and non-creative work by designating as creative the work “if done by a thinking mind” and non-creative “if done by a blank” who monotonously runs the same circle he has acquired “uncritical[ly] from others (p. 933). Galt, as the mouthpiece of Ayn Rand, reproaches philosophy with deterministic outlooks as paving way for the incursions of “the Morality of Death” which has “the mystics of spirit and the mystics of muscle” as its spearheads (p. 940). All the directives issued by the mystical masters are predicated on “the doctrine that splits [...] [man’s] soul and body” into two and pits one against the other (p. 939).

Gramsci and Rand also crisscross on the question of: “What is Man?” For Gramsci, man is an ensemble of the “active relations” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 352) that he enters into with “the society of

men and the society of things: i.e. the human and the natural world” (p. 353). If one’s individuality is the cumulative sum of his relations with the other men and the natural world, then the acquaintance of one’s individuality boils down to the acquaintance of “the *ensemble* of these relations” (p. 352). The prospect of any change in one’s individuality, on Gramscian ratiocination, is contingent upon “modifi[cation] [in] the ensemble of these relations” (p. 352). The ensemble of relations where “a person holds the minds of other men, not objective reality, as his ultimate psycho-epistemological frame of reference”, gives birth to an individuality reverberating hollowness-induced power-lust (Branden, [1969]1979, pp. 179-80). According to Rand, power-lust is “a manifestation of helplessness, of self-loathing and of the desire for the unearned” (Rand, 1962, p. 62). Orren Boyle’s and James Taggart’s arrested individualities, in *Atlas Shrugged*, are products of the above ensemble of relations with the society of man and the society of things. Another relational variation is manifested by the individualities of the Randian ideal men, like John Galt, Dagny Taggart and Hank Rearden, in *Atlas Shrugged*: they take reality as their standard frame of reference which enables them to relate with other men on value for value reciprocity. The selfishness of their individualities is the logical outcome of the above relational composite with the society of things and the society of man.

*Atlas Shrugged* is a battlefield where two relational composites, antagonistically poised to each other, wage a prolonged battle in a bid to achieve ascendancy over the other. The complex of the Witch Doctors, Attilas and the second-handers fight for the conservation of their individualities; whereas, the Randian ideal men are fighting for modification in their relational equation with the society of man, an important component of individuality-formation. Galt rattles off all the bromides the parasitic complex resorts to when entering in relations with other men: i.e. “[m]en do not live by the mind”, “[t]he mind is impotent”, “[t]here are values higher than the mind” (Rand, 1957, p. 924). These bromides hamper the smooth translation of the ideal man’s principles from the material to social realm where he is supposed to deal with men since they encourage the parasites to trample upon the ideal man’s property rights with a gun. This gives rise to master and slave duality in which all subjectivities are placed in the categories of the oppressor and the oppressed. Galt uncovers his opponents relational modus operandi with the society of man: whereby, “the men of justice, of independence, of reason, of wealth, [and] of self-esteem” are dragged to “sacrificial alters”(p. 924). Realizing the impossibility of integrated individualities in such ambience, the ideal men decided to strike and withdrew for Atlantis: “where the symbol of all relationships among [...] men [...], is *the trader*” [...], who live by values, not by loot, [...], both in matter and in spirit” (p. 935). The quote perfectly carries Rand’s definition of man.

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is a heavyweight contribution to the Marxist theory in the sense that it delivered Marxism from its “longstanding limitations [...] variously described as economic determinism, class reductionism,[and]philosophical essentialism” (Saccarelli, 2020, p. 179). All three aforementioned isms disrupt the necessary dialectics ecumenically presumed to be accompanying leftist theoretical constructs; they are predicated on the atomistic reduction of one kind or another. The theory of hegemony wrought an end to the singular focus on class antagonism by lending purview to “many[...] [other] social antagonisms”: i.e. political society vs. civil society, coercion vs. consent, war of manoeuvre vs. war of position and traditional vs. organic intellectuals (pp. 179-80). Where Marxism pinned its emphasis on the first terms of the aforementioned binaries, Gramsci granted valuational upper-hand to the second terms of the binaries which led many critics to conclude that Gramsci’s theorizations open a new era called Post-Marxism because it deviated so radically from traditional Marxism. His act of upending the binaries which renders the conditioned terms to be conditioning, is comprehensively explained by Saccarelli with an analogy: Where Charon, a mythological figure, ferried “the souls of the deceased from the world of the living to that of the

dead” Gramsci resurrected the elements considered as bric-a-brac in the Marxist Theoretical corpus to the position of indispensability (p. 80). Apart from this, Gramsci did not confine himself only with the projection of hegemony as “the political strategy necessary for the working class to come to power” (Hall, 1987, p. 16). He also concerned himself with the investigation of the ensemble of mechanisms with which the bourgeois “maintain[ed] its hegemonic grip” (p. 16).

Gramsci and Rand rule out the normative theoretical conviction that those seizing power “govern strictly by force”. It is hegemony---which “attends to consciousness, [and] to ways of thinking”---which makes conducive for the ruler to “obtain the consent of the dominated”: with consent implying the phenomenon where the dominated takes the arbitrary injunctions of his ruler as “norm” and strikes a chord with his placement “at the periphery” (Gencarella, 2020, p. 222). To put it in another way, for Gramsci, the ascendancy of the dominant group demonstrates itself in two ways: “‘domination’ and [...] ‘intellectual and moral leadership’” (Mouffe, 1979, pp. 9-10). Rand, quite like Gramsci, holds the intellectual and moral leadership viz., hegemonic control as primary tool used in the subordination of the oppressed. Rand heaped denunciations on intellectuals, i.e. Immanuel Kant and B. F. Skinner, for the intellectual wreckage of Western Civilization. In *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt lays bare Rand’s take on Kant’s deontology by saying, “[i]f you wish to achieve full virtue, you must seek no gratitude in return for your sacrifice, no praise, no love, no admiration, no self-esteem [...]; the faintest trace of any gain dilutes your virtue” (Rand, 1957, p. 941). In Rand’s opinion, Kantian ethics inflict upon man stringent self-sacrifice and renunciation of pleasure; it can boil down to self-abnegation and self-loathing. According to John Galt, the postulation that man’s body and spirit are destined to be at loggerheads with each other, sets death as the epigraph of man’s life since “[a] body without a soul is a corpse, a soul without a body is a ghost” (Rand, 1957, p. 939). The former is the vision of man advocated by empiricism whose spokesperson is B. F. Skinner and the latter is the conjecture of man favored by rationalism whose spokesperson is Immanuel Kant. According to John Galt, the groundwork for making man “fall apart” is laid in the negation of reason (p. 939). Both the philosophical schools of empiricism and rationalism are synonymous with rational passivity: in the case of empiricism, “uncontrollable instincts” supplant rational integration viz., concept-formation; in the case of rationalism, “mystic revelations” pop up to occupy the place meant for reason in man’s life (pp. 939-40). This philosophical alliance between empiricism and rationalism serves as the principal mechanism with which the oppressor maintains his hegemonic grip over the oppressed, in *Atlas Shrugged*.

Language, for Gramsci, denotes particularized and individualized “way[s] of thinking and feeling” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 349) about the world besides being “the faculty to transmit messages, verbal or otherwise” (p. 348). Thinking and feeling about the world is the province of the worldview, or philosophy, which is what language assumes to be at the level of common sense. Common sense implies the act of spontaneous and unelaborated philosophizing, or thinking or feeling about the world, prior to the conscious direction given by the revolutionary intellectuals. Gramsci grades the worldview into folklore, common sense and the philosophy of praxis according to its level of critical elaboration. By calling folklore the “lowest level of popular culture,” Gramsci does not come to terms with its rigidity in relation to the conservation of the status quo. Folklore stands for the worldview when it is “reticent to change” and dismissive of all conscious agency in the workings of the world (Gencarella, 2020, p. 231). The Randian version of the folkloric worldview is tribalism. It is with the aid of such catchphrases, encapsulating the “tribal premise[s]”, as “one must ‘belong’, one must be ‘in’, one must swim with the ‘mainstream’, one must follow the lead of ‘those who know’”, that men are taught to conserve the status quo and abhor the prospects of progressive elaboration of their conception of the world (Rand, 1982, p. 60). Common sense, on other hand, as a worldview is

constitutive of two elements, namely common sense and good sense: the situation when “bestial and elemental passions” predominate man’s consciousness, it is called common sense; whereas, the situations where attempts to “the overcoming [of] bestial and elemental passions” are made “through a conception of necessity which gives conscious direction to one’s activity”, are called good sense (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328). Gramsci entrusts the intellectuals of the revolutionary project to work for making the good sense in common sense “more unitary and coherent” via education (p. 328). Gramsci, unlike Lenin who believed efforts aiming critical elaboration of the masses as “ancillary to politics”, believes in the building up of revolutionary subjects, holding the philosophy of praxis as their conception of the world, before indulging in practical revolutionary politics (Femia, 1981, p. 156). The task of constructing revolutionary consciousness is given to the revolutionary party which Gramsci conceives, unlike the traditional Marxist view of the party as authoritatively related to the masses, “as an organism and an orchestra” whose modus operandi is “the active, direct participation of all members of the movement, ‘even if this creates an appearance of tumult and disintegration” (p. 157). Being an organic intellectual of a counter-hegemonic historic bloc entrusted with the task of the obliteration of political society, Galt could not force other characters to passively consent to his conclusions and his aversion for imposition from the revolutionary vanguard is corroborated by his tolerance with Dagny’s recalcitrance. Despite incurring recurrent beatings at the hands of the looters, Dagny does not comport with Galt’s idea of the renunciation of the world for its later reconstruction. Her repugnance is vividly contained in her question that she asks Galt upon her accidental landing in the Gulch, “[a]m I a guest here or a prisoner?” (Rand, 1957, p. 651). In the contentious debate that followed the question, it transpired that she initially regarded herself as a prisoner only to be convinced later by Galt that she is not. Galt’s patience with Dagny is evidence of his firm belief in the efficacy of the establishment of civil society as self-regulative.

Critical construction of one’s conception of the world warrants the uninterrupted provision of intellectual freedom. Despite being a Marxist theorist, Gramsci emerges as desirous of intellectual freedom and reinforces its ubiquity in his theorization with an additional proviso: that the intellectual freedom must have smooth sailing despite its being “continually question[ing] the principles that seem most essential” to the philosophy of praxis (Femia, 1981, p. 176). Galt counts out the option of using force in his dealings with his potential allies because of his conviction that “[t]o force a man to drop his mind and to accept your will as a substitute, with a gun in place of a syllogism, with terror in place of proof [...] ---is to attempt to exist in defiance of reality” (Rand, 1957, p. 936). Force takes out the necessary intellectual freedom required for critical construction of the conception of the world. The stronger resistance to Galt’s revolutionary project came not from the looters but from the members of his own clique, i.e. Hank Rearden, Dagny Taggart and Robert Stadler. But what is noticeable is Galt’s tolerance of their deviance which affords them required freedom to critically construct their worldview. He did not constrict their freedom even when, to say in Gramscian way, it questioned the principles that seemed most essential to his revolutionary strategy: i.e. the principle of the renunciation of the world for its later reconstruction.

## Conclusion

Both Rand and Gramsci have unwavering trust in the conditioning status of the superstructure, conscious and active human agency and the resultant aversion for determinism of any sort which is mainly responsible for their emergence as thinkers subscribing to the same methodologies in their respective theorizations of social relations of power. However, their trust on either of the above elements was never monistic; rather, each element is tied to its counterpart in a dialectical equation: i.e. substructure, though conditioning the economic infrastructure, is not conditioning moralistically

as the Hegelian divine spirit but as having valuational upper-hand in the dialectical equation in which it is tied with the economic infrastructure. Hence, it is the observance of dialectics as the methodological orientation on the part of both the thinkers that has resulted in their theorizations to appear as methodologically similar---despite distinction in emphasis--- that the paper has posited and demonstrated.

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