

# THE SOUL OF A COLLECTIVIST

*by Ayn Rand*

From *For The New Intellectual*

The theme of Ayn Rand's novel *The Fountainhead* is: individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man's soul. The story presents the career of Howard Roark, an architect and innovator who breaks with tradition, recognizes no authority but that of his own independent judgment, struggles for the integrity of his creative work against every form of social opposition—and wins. This passage is the confession of Roark's antipode and archenemy, Ellsworth M. Toohey, an architectural critic and sociologist who spends his life plotting the future establishment of a collectivist society. He is addressing one of his own victims, Peter Keating.

"I've always said just that. Clearly, precisely and openly. It's not my fault if you couldn't hear. You could, of course. You didn't want to. Which was safer than deafness—for me. I said I intended to rule. Like all my spiritual predecessors. But I'm luckier than they were. I inherited the fruit of their efforts and I shall be the one who'll see the great dream made real. I see it all around me today. I recognize it. I don't like it. I didn't expect to like it. Enjoyment is not my destiny. I shall find such satisfaction as my capacity permits. I shall rule...

"It's only a matter of discovering the lever. If you learn how to rule one single man's soul, you can get the rest of mankind. It's the soul, Peter, the soul. Not whips or swords or fire or guns. That's why the Caesars, the Attilas, the Napoleons were fools and did not last. We will. The soul, Peter, is that which can't be ruled. It must be broken. Drive a wedge in, get your fingers on it—and the man is yours. You won't need a whip—he'll bring it to you and ask to be whipped. Set him in reverse—and his own mechanism will do your work for you. Use him against himself. Want

to know how it's done? See if I ever lied to you. See if you haven't heard all this for years, but didn't want to hear, and the fault is yours, not mine. There are many ways. Here's one. Make man feel small. Make him feel guilty. Kill his aspiration and his integrity. That's difficult. The worst among you gropes for an ideal in his own twisted way. Kill integrity by internal corruption. Use it against itself. Direct it toward a goal destructive of all integrity. Preach selflessness. Tell man that he must live for others. Tell men that altruism is the ideal. Not a single one of them has ever achieved it and not a single one ever will. His every living instinct screams against it. But don't you see what you accomplish? Man realizes that he's incapable of what he's accepted as the noblest virtue—and it gives him a sense of guilt, of sin, of his own basic unworthiness. Since the supreme ideal is beyond his grasp, he gives up eventually all ideals, all aspiration, all sense of his personal value. He feels himself obliged to preach what he can't practice. But one can't be good halfway or honest approximately. To preserve one's integrity is a hard battle. Why preserve that which one knows to be corrupt already? His soul gives up its self-respect. You've got him. He'll obey. He'll be glad to obey—because he can't trust himself, he feels uncertain, he feels unclean. That's one way. Here's another. Kill man's sense of values. Kill his capacity to recognize greatness or to achieve it. Great men can't be ruled. We don't want any great men. Don't deny the conception of greatness. Destroy it from within. The great is the rare, the difficult, the exceptional. Set up standards of achievement open to all, to the least, to the most inept—and you stop the impetus to effort in all men, great or small. You stop all incentive to improvement, to excellence, to perfection.... Don't set out to raze all shrines—you'll frighten men. Enshrine mediocrity—and the shrines are razed. Then there's another way. Kill by laughter. Laughter is an instrument of human joy. Learn to use it as a weapon of destruction. Turn it into a sneer. It's simple. Tell them to laugh at everything. Tell them that a sense of humor is an unlimited virtue. Don't let anything remain sacred in a man's soul—and his soul won't be sacred to him. Kill reverence and you've killed the hero in man. One doesn't reverence with a giggle. He'll obey and he'll set no limits to his obedience—anything goes—nothing is too serious. Here's another way. This is most important. Don't allow men to be happy. Happiness is self-contained and self-sufficient. Happy men have no time and no use for you. Happy men are free men. So kill their joy in living. Take away from them whatever is dear or important to them. Never let them have what

they want. Make them feel that the mere fact of a personal desire is evil. Bring them to a state where saying '*I want*' is no longer a natural right, but a shameful admission. Altruism is of great help in this. Unhappy men will come to you. They'll need you. They'll come for consolation, for support, for escape. Nature allows no vacuum. Empty man's soul—and the space is yours to fill. I don't see why you should look so shocked, Peter. This is the oldest one of all. Look back at history. Look at any great system of ethics, from the Orient up. Didn't they all preach the sacrifice of personal joy? Under all the complications of verbiage, haven't they all had a single leitmotif: sacrifice, renunciation, self-denial? Haven't you been able to catch their theme song – 'Give up, give up, give up, give up'? Look at the moral atmosphere of today. Everything enjoyable, from cigarettes to sex to ambition to the profit motive, is considered depraved or sinful. Just prove that a thing makes men happy—and you've damned it. That's how far we've come. We've tied happiness to guilt. And we've got mankind by the throat. Throw your first-born into a sacrificial furnace—lie on a bed of nails—go into the desert to mortify the flesh—don't dance—don't go to the movies on Sunday—don't try to get rich—don't smoke—don't drink. It's all the same line. The great line. Fools think that taboos of this nature are just nonsense. Something left over, old-fashioned. But there's always a purpose in nonsense. Don't bother to examine a folly—ask yourself only what it accomplishes. Every system of ethics that preached sacrifice grew into a world power and ruled millions of men. Of course, you must dress it up. You must tell people that they'll achieve a superior kind of happiness by giving up everything that makes them happy. You don't have to be too clear about it. Use big vague words. 'Universal Harmony' – 'Eternal Spirit' – 'Divine Purpose' – 'Nirvana' – 'Paradise' – 'Racial Supremacy' – 'The Dictatorship of the Proletariat.' Internal corruption, Peter. That's the oldest one of all. The farce has been going on for centuries and men still fall for it. Yet the test should be so simple: just listen to any prophet and if you hear him speak of sacrifice—run. Run faster than from a plague. It stands to reason that where there's sacrifice, there's someone collecting sacrificial offerings. Where there's service, there's someone being served. The man who speaks to you of sacrifice, speaks of slaves and masters. And intends to be the master. But if ever you hear a man telling you that you must be happy, that it's your natural right, that your first duty is to yourself—that will be the man who's not after your soul. That will be the man who has nothing to gain from you. But let him

come and you'll scream your empty heads off, howling that he's a selfish monster. So the racket is safe for many, many centuries. But here you might have noticed something. I said, 'It stands to reason.' Do you see? Men have a weapon against you. Reason. So you must be very sure to take it away from them. Cut the props from under it. But be careful. Don't deny outright. Never deny anything outright, you give your hand away. Don't say reason is evil—though some have gone that far and with astonishing success. Just say that reason is limited. That there's something above it. What? You don't have to be too clear about it either. The field's inexhaustible. 'Instinct' – 'Feeling' – 'Revelation' – 'Divine Intuition' – 'Dialectic Materialism.' If you get caught at some crucial point and somebody tells you that your doctrine doesn't make sense—you're ready for him. You tell him that there's something above sense. That here he must not try to think, he must feel. He must believe. Suspend reason and you play it deuces wild. Anything goes in any manner you wish whenever you need it. You've got him. Can you rule a thinking man? We don't want any thinking men....

"Peter, you've heard all this. You've seen me practicing it for ten years. You see it being practiced all over the world. Why are you disgusted? You have no right to sit there and stare at me with the virtuous superiority of being shocked. You're in on it. You've taken your share and you've got to go along. You're afraid to see where it's leading. I'm not. I'll tell you. The world of the future. The world I want. A world of obedience and of unity. A world where the thought of each man will not be his own, but an attempt to guess the thought of the brain of his neighbor who'll have no thought of his own but an attempt to guess the thought of the next neighbor who'll have no thought—and so on, Peter, around the globe. Since all must agree with all. A world where no man will hold a desire for himself, but will direct all his efforts to satisfy the desires of his neighbor who'll have no desires except to satisfy the desires of the next neighbor who'll have no desires—around the globe, Peter. Since all must serve all. A world in which man will not work for so innocent an incentive as money, but for that headless monster—prestige. The approval of his fellows—their good opinion—the opinion of men who'll be allowed to hold no opinion. An octopus, all tentacles and no brain. Judgment, Peter! Not judgment, but public polls. An average drawn upon zeroes—since no individuality will be permitted. A world with its motor cut off and a single heart, pumped by hand. My hand—and the hands of a few, a very few other men like

me. Those who know what makes you tick—you great, wonderful average, you who have not risen in fury when we called you the average, the little, the common, you who've liked and accepted those names. You'll sit enthroned and enshrined, you, the little people, the absolute ruler to make all past rulers squirm with envy, the absolute, the unlimited, God and Prophet and King combined. *Vox populi*. The average, the common, the general. Do you know the proper antonym for Ego? Bromide, Peter. The rule of the bromide. But even the trite has to be originated by someone at some time. We'll do the originating. *Vox dei*. We'll enjoy unlimited submission—from men who've learned nothing except to submit. We'll call it 'to serve.' We'll give out medals for service. You'll fall over one another in a scramble to see who can submit better and more. There will be no other distinction to seek. No other form of personal achievement. Can you see Howard Roark in the picture? No? Then don't waste time on foolish questions. Everything that can't be ruled, must go. And if freaks persist in being born occasionally, they will not survive beyond their twelfth year. When their brain begins to function, it will feel the pressure and it will explode. The pressure gauged to a vacuum. Do you know the fate of deep-sea creatures brought out to sunlight? So much for future Roarks. The rest of you will smile and obey. Have you noticed that the imbecile always smiles? Man's first frown is the first touch of God on his forehead. The touch of thought. But we'll have neither God nor thought. Only voting by smiles. Automatic levers—all saying yes...Now if you were a little more intelligent—like your ex-wife, for instance—you'd ask: What of us, the rulers? What of me, Ellsworth Monkton Toohey? And I'd say, Yes, you're right. I'll achieve no more than you will. I'll have no purpose save to keep you contented. To lie, to flatter you, to praise you, to inflate your vanity. To make speeches about the people and the common good. Peter, my poor old friend, I'm the most selfless man you've ever known. I have less independence than you, whom I just forced to sell your soul. You've used people at least for the sake of what you could get from them for yourself. I want nothing for myself. I use people for the sake of what I can do to them. It's my only function and satisfaction. I have no private purpose. I want power. I want my world of the future. Let all live for all. Let all sacrifice and none profit. Let all suffer and none enjoy. Let progress stop. Let all stagnate. There's equality in stagnation. All subjugated to the will of all. Universal slavery—without even the dignity of a master. Slavery to slavery. A great circle—and a total equality. The world of the future....

“Look around you. Pick up any newspaper and read the headlines. Isn’t it coming? Isn’t it here? Every single thing I told you? Isn’t Europe swallowed already and we’re stumbling on to follow? Everything I said is contained in a single word—collectivism. And isn’t that the god of our century? To act together. To think—together. To feel—together. To unite, to agree, to obey. To obey, to serve, to sacrifice. Divide and conquer—first. But then—unite and rule. We’ve discovered that one at last. Remember the Roman Emperor who said he wished humanity had a single neck so he could cut it? People have laughed at him for centuries. But we’ll have the last laugh. We’ve accomplished what he couldn’t accomplish. We’ve taught men to unite. This makes one neck ready for one leash. We found the magic word. Collectivism. Look at Europe, you fool. Can’t you see past the guff and recognize the essence? One country is dedicated to the proposition that man has no rights, that the collective is all. The individual held as evil, the mass—as God. No motive and no virtue permitted—except that of service to the proletariat. That’s one version. Here’s another. A country dedicated to the proposition that man has no rights, that the State is all. The individual held as evil, the race—as God. No motive and no virtue permitted—except that of service to the race. Am I raving or is this the cold reality of two continents already? Watch the pincer movement. If you’re sick of one version, we push you into the other. We get you coming and going. We’ve closed the doors. We’ve fixed the coin. Heads—collectivism, and tails—collectivism. Fight the doctrine which slaughters the individual with a doctrine which slaughters the individual. Give up your soul to a council—or give it up to a leader. But give it up, give it up, give it up. My technique, Peter. Offer poison as food and poison as antidote. Go fancy on the trimmings, but hang on to the main objective. Give the fools a choice, let them have their fun—but don’t forget the only purpose you have to accomplish. Kill the individual. Kill man’s soul. The rest will follow automatically.”