

The Lonely Crowd' A Timeless, Pervasive Experience with Special Reference to Ayn Rand and Chinua Achebe

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The concept of the lonely crowd is not exclusively an American or African experience. It is as old as man and as prevalent and intractable as feelings of joy and sorrow. As an experience, it cuts across boundaries of place and time. **The Old Testament** is a haunting expression of human loneliness. This applies to Job, who is vanquished by 'the Voice out of the Whirlwind', to the wise men of Ecclesiastes who amid the uncertainties and vanities of life, have found certitude in the attitude of God and to Faustus whose quest for a richer and fuller life, ends in his loneliness both from man and God (Ch. 40:6).

There is overwhelming evidence from psychology, sociology and other branches of contemporary thought in support of the fact that man has lost his ancient moorings in nature, religion and simple human relationships. These changes have so affected man that he has become lonely and insignificant. The very titles of a number of provocative books on modern life suggest the anxiety concerning the state of man in our time: Caudwell's *Studies in a Dying Culture*, Rollo May's *Man in Search of Himself*, **Eric Fromm's** *The Sane Society*, Erich Heller's *The Disinherited Mind*, Erich and Maria Josephson's *Man Alone*, and David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* are among a vast selection of books that read like the fever-chart of a sick society. Eric Fromm in his book *The Sane Society* says that "there is something fundamentally wrong with our way of life and the aims towards which we are striving" (Fromm 1965:19).

The problem of 'man alone' is the culmination of a long historical process. In primitive societies, the world was identical with the tribe and the individual was an integral part of the world or tribal community. In the medieval world, the concept of the universe was broadened to include the earth, and the elements. But it was seen with the earth as its centre and man as the purpose of creation. Everything was interrelated and secure in a fixed relationship just as everybody had a fixed position in the medieval society. But in course of time, new vistas were opened up. The earth became one of the satellites of the sun. Doubts began to crop up concerning the place and purpose of man. Yet until the end of the nineteenth century, nature and society had not lost their concreteness and definiteness, nor was the old framework of belief completely lost. But with the progress in scientific thought, technical discoveries and the dissolution of traditional bonds, the definiteness and concreteness are in the process of being lost. The decline of man, as reflected in contemporary thought and literature, is an expression of the awareness of his total loss, which is so upsetting because man has not been able to find new

compensations and rationalizations. Eric Fromm observes in **The Sane Society** that:

We are not any more in the centre of the universe, we are not any more the purpose of the creation, we are not any more the masters of a manageable and recognizable world—we are a speck of dust, we are a nothing, somewhere in space without any concrete relatedness to anything(Fromm 1956:110).

Nietzsche, Freud and Marx were the most powerful influence on the twentieth century mind and had different ways of looking at the individual's plight in society. Nietzsche saw that the individual was being swallowed by the herd, and that people were living by a 'slave morality'. But Freud saw alienation as a symptom of neurosis or the recurrent conflict between the individual nature and society. Marx saw alienation as a product of the compulsive dehumanization of man in the modern bourgeois society. All these three thinkers believed that the modern industrialized society robbed the individual of his actual worth and dignity.

In both Rand's and Achebe's novels, one notices a change that evolved from surface description to the invocations of the deep silent regions of the mind, from art as a means of social propaganda, to a powerful medium used for the expressions of a 'real' reality that is different from photographic representation.

The writings of Rand and Achebe are psychological in the sense that it projects action inside. Both writers operate from a dialectical experience of reality. Rand and Achebe are concerned with those paradoxical experiences of life, and the contradictory elements of the interior world of consciousness leads them to undertake an epistemological exploration of reality. With Rand, the dialectic can be seen operating from a thematic and a philosophical level; and with Achebe, from a structural, symbolic and thematic level. The sense of reality is presented as a matter of opposites held in dialectical relations.

The dialectic is given in the form of tensions and problems that have concerned mankind from the beginning:

- 1) Individualism versus Collectivism
- 2) Good versus Evil
- 3) Faith versus Reason
- 4) Meaning versus Absurdity
- 5) Tradition versus Modernity
- 6) Life versus Death
- 7) Being versus Non-Being

Volume 9 Issue 4, April 2020

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8) Myth versus Reality

The dialectic has been a perennial source of inspiration to the American artist, Ayn Rand and the African artist, Chinua Achebe. Both American and African Literature derive their alien quality from this tension. The dialectic is seen operating in the form of the most fundamental experiences of life: order and chaos unity and dissolution, isolation and communion. The dialectic is also woven around the basic impulses, emotions and instincts that the human mind may be presumed to be experiencing continually: ecstasy and terror, hope and fear, love and hate, expansion and contraction of moods, like the 'diastole' and 'systole' movements of the heart. This dialectic is seen operating in the form of the most fundamental experience of life: order and chaos unity and dissolution, isolation and communion. The dialectic is also woven around the basic impulses, emotions and instincts that the human mind may be presumed to be experiencing continually: ecstasy and terror, hope and fear, love and hate, expansion and contraction of moods, like the 'diastole' and 'systole' movements of the heart.

Since the Existentialists are much concerned with the plight of man in a mass society, with the threat to his freedom and identity and with man's loneliness, a case may easily be made in favour of the Existentialist influence on Rand and Achebe. It is true that loneliness exile, disaffiliation, nausea and the loss of self have become part of the Existentialist vocabulary in our time. The protagonists in Rand's and Achebe's fiction are estranged from their respective societies and are conscious of futility, absurdity, nothingness, falsity, emptiness and ugliness of life. As pioneers in some sense or other, these protagonists must have felt the problem of their identity.

Achebe in his article, '**The Nature and Fulfilment of the Individual**' tells us that almost every human culture either now or in the past has been confronted with the two realities of social man – his individuality and his membership of a group. Differences between cultures may therefore be sought not in the presence of absence of this polarity but rather, on whether they place their emphasis nearer one pole or the other. Of course, the social and moral consequences of this apparently 'simple' choice of emphasis by society, Achebe says, may result in differences between cultures so great as to appear almost qualitative. Yet it is important to remember that however strongly one culture may seem to be dominated by either of these realities, the other is always present, if only in a recessive role (Achebe 1983:161).

Whether a man's individuality or his membership of a group is better, will depend on the goals which a particular society sets for itself, depending on its view of a good life. In America, the emphasis, on the supremacy of the individual seem to be the right one and is even a hall-mark of civilization itself. One of the major sources could be the Judaic Tradition. In The Book of Ezekiel, there is a memorable prophetic insight when an older tribal, teaching on collective responsibility for sin, is superseded by a new morality based on individual accountability. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die", said the prophet. The old proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children teeth are set

on edge", does not hold good anymore (Ch. 18:1-4). When the West was ready to enthrone individualism, there was biblical authority ready at hand: but there were also assertions of the equality of man in the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century in America and France. Ultimately, the sweeping success of Freud gave the seal of scientific approval, in a scientific oriented age, to the growing preoccupation with self. It was perhaps Ralph Waldo Emerson who first used the word 'individualism' as a contention for the way of life which upheld the privacy of the individual. His definition was imbued with an optimistic faith, peculiarly American. But in his book Democracy in America, the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville was far less optimistic. He used individualism pejoratively as a threat to society, as akin to selfishness.

The critical inquiry into the nature of individualism in the novels of Ayn Rand and Chinua Achebe has been a fascinating voyage through a fictional locus of remarkable linear progression. The perception gained here reinforces our initial assumption that the understanding of individualism is invariably linked with non-conformism, as it challenges and repudiates existing norms. In a sense, this response to conventional modes is facilitated, as one sees in this study, under the substitute norms which appear more viable. What is triggered off and eventually promoted, is the search for a new self-identification where it becomes possible for the individual to be released from the corporative reality of social and tribal existence. Still it is possible that even such a novel ideology, when not challenged by new forces either in the form of opposition or increased awareness, tends to become submerged and for the most part go unrecognized. But this is certainly not what occurs in the case of the American novelist Ayn Rand or the Nigerian Novelist Chinua Achebe.

The theme of 'Man against the State' and the 'Producer versus the Parasite' in Rand's fiction and the successful emergence of the autonomous individuals as 'Demi-Gods' in 'Atlantis' in Atlas Shrugged covers a span of almost half a century as represented in the four novels analysed in this study. Ayn Rand believes in the individual self. In her view the creator, producer, artist, scientist, thinker never believes in a collective brain. All great creation and production are experienced in the silent solitary sanctuary of one's own mind. None of these creators are prompted by a desire to serve another but their own selves. The creator's truth is his only motive. He wants to achieve it his own way ... be it a building, a book, an engine, a symphony, an air plane, a creation that is his whole goal and his life, his prime mover: The creation is important as an end in itself, not its users. In Randian terminology, this is what is called 'selfish' – to be concerned with the 'self' and its own interests. A man's spirit is his 'self'. The vision, strength, courage evolves from his own spirit ... his own essence of being; the entity which is his whole consciousness. In **The Virtue of Selfishness** Rand defines a self. "To think, to feel, to judge, to act are the functions of the ego, the spirit" (VOS: 16). Man must live true to his own nature first and not negate the spirit that is within him. One that denies one's own self cannot be called whole of human and cannot be considered alive to relate to the selves outside it. It is a contradiction in terms.

Though Rand's protagonists, in all her fictional works advocate the glorification of the 'self', and this may appear to be in direct contrast to what the great religions of the world preach today; a closer and deeper study of the philosophy of the various religions can be capsulized to mean that man, in order to be termed morally sound or good, must be truthful and honest to himself first, only then can he be truthful and honest to those around him. This is precisely what Rand articulates and advocates. There should not be a dichotomy between the self within and the self without. It is within one's own conscience, observes Rand that one should seek God, not in outward forms and rituals.

In this respect, Rand's positive outsiders are the most aesthetically sound, 'selfish' beings, which in Randian terms is directly opposite to those souls that denounce a 'self'. The word 'selfish' denote virtuous qualities of character for Ayn Rand, but this word has antagonized many people to whom the term does not signify the things Ayn Rand means. The semantic meaning and the dictionary definition ascribed to the word 'selfishness' is, 'concern with one's own interests'. In the popular usage of the term, the word has become synonymous with 'evil'. It conjures up an image of a 'dog eat dog' attitude; an individual who cares for no living being and pursues nothing beyond the gratification of the mindless whims of a given moment. But 'selfishness' entails two concepts, observes Rand in **The Virtue of Selfishness**:

- 1) A hierarchy of values set by the standards of one's self interests
- 2) The refusal to sacrifice a higher value to a lower one or to a non-value (Rand 1964:9).

The concept of being 'concerned with one's own interests' does not include a moral evaluation. It does not tell us whether 'concern with one's own interests' is good or evil. Nor does it tell us what constitutes man's actual interests. Interests are relative, it differs from individual to individual.

Altruists conclude that any action taken for the benefit of others is good, and any action taken for the benefit of one's own self is evil. If it is so, the beneficiary of the action is the only criterion for morality. According to Rand, it is the most immoral concept, and ultimately, she observes, even the altruist thinks only in terms of himself. Every man, even the most religious, seeks his own end first. Even in the 'selfless' process of being concerned and involved with 'the other', he is being gratified that he is concerned with and for others and that gratification is his selfish pleasure. He is concerned thereby with the 'self' – the concern with his own interest and pleasure. A dictator is regarded as amoral according to Rand, since the unspeakable and unquestionable atrocities he commits are intended to benefit the people and not himself. Rand says, the battle is only over the question of whose whim, one's own or society's or God's. Consequently, Rand's protagonists, be it a Roark, a Dominique, or a Galt, are not actually alien from society, as everyman, whether he accepts it or not, is to a certain extent caught in the raptures of their own individual selves, their own individual lives. This is what Nathaniel Branden in his book **The Psychology of Self-Esteem** terms "The Psychology of Pleasure" (Branden 1987: 41). And if these protagonists are condemned as selfish brutes, then every man, king and beggar will be and should be condemned because they too

live for their own personal pleasure. As Branden says; "pleasure is not a luxury but a profound psychological need" (Ibidem).

Throughout the three phases, Rand brings to light the fact that the main focus in her society is on the individual consciousness while Achebe's focus is more on the communal consciousness. In each of their literary works, an individualistic hero battles the forces of collectivism and mediocrity, which are threatening to destroy the world.

In Phase I, Rand is not yet prepared to depict, her concept of the ideal man. Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalevsky of *We the Living* are only suggestions of what they might have been, had they been born into a free country, instead of the Soviet Union. Here is this phase, Sobran in his article, "Mussolini Shrugged: Ayn Rand Revived" tells us that Rand's appeal seems to be to young people of Kira's age, for whom "Society is just parents writ large, and in whom the desire to be parents is still unborn" (Sobran 1989:54). Individualism and Collectivism are the only options; no network of affection and obligation has reality. When Rand includes parents in her picture, she shows them as they look to unhappy adolescents, kind but potentially tyrannical, and above all, uncomprehending. Kira's parents understand nothing, neither the nature of the Soviet State (they think it will pass quickly) nor her own desire to be independent (they disapprove of her living with Leo out of wedlock.) Kira's parents are ineffectual. They have no wisdom to impart. She has no debt to them. From early childhood she has rejected their religion, and they have long since given up taking her to church; it does not even seem to matter to them. Their speeches expose them as small, deluded people.

Though the protagonists Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalevsky defy the social system (communism) and will not give in, **We the Living** ends on a pessimistic note. But in the next novel, **Anthem**, the seeds of an optimistic thinking are sown and the consequent triumph of the individuals (namely, Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000), over the collective is illustrated. Equality 7-2521 is considered a threat to the established order. But unlike Kira Argounova and Leo Kovalevsky of **We the Living** who succumb to the collective mass, Equality 7-2521 and his lady love Liberty 5-3000, break free in happiness to rediscover their humanity and freedom. Howard Roark succeeds in evolving as the 'man-child' of **The Fountainhead**. He believes that the fountainhead of all human progress and happiness on earth is the Ego. Roark is seen triumphing over the Peter Keatings and the Ellsworth Tooheys, the social suckers of **The Fountainhead**, and for the first time the individual reigns supreme, steadfast in his goal, namely the pursuit of his own happiness. John Galt takes the concept of Individualism to its culmination point. The 'man-child' of **The Fountainhead** in this stage becomes "the demi-god; the self-created, without ancestors or blood-ties". John Galt stops the motor of the world, drains the brains from society and creates an Atlantis on the mountains of Colorado. This Utopian society of the demi-Gods serves as a refuge from the 'looters', 'moochers' and 'scraps' of society, who survive on the productivity of the demi-Gods, contributing nothing to society. The motto of the Utopian community strikes a strong contrast to the

parasitical society where a man “will never live for the sake of another man, nor expect another man to live for mine” (AS 1003). Till the world of **The Fountainhead**, parasites like the Peter Keating and Ellsworth Toohey, still remain, but in the world of **Atlas Shrugged**, these parasites are totally annihilated, the men of the mind succeed, and the producers and creators are called back to recreate and rebuild.

The concept of the ‘Individual versus Society’ is dealt with quite differently in the fiction of Chinua Achebe. In the process of developing the concept of the emerging individual, Achebe articulates not only the destructive forces in the social system, but also describes the positive values against which they can be measured. Here each individual must accommodate himself to a broader social context, and undermining the social system is a moral order. But in spite of the fact that in Achebe’s society much more emphasis is placed on community values than it does on the individual, Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Obi and Ikem Osidi and Chris Oriko and Beatrice Okoh are fully conceived characters. Nevertheless, the community has an equal status with the individual protagonists. But unlike in Rand’s fiction where the individual triumphs and society fails, the protagonists in Achebe’s works, while trying to evolve as individuals, meet with tragedy and consequent failure, and the community survives. As Okonkwo hangs from a tree, as Ezeulu retreats into madness, as Obi gets sucked into corruption and imprisonment, as the people fail to remove their concept leaders and as Chris Oriko falls victim to a rapacious police sergeant, one may feel that there is not much prospect of a better future for the individuals. The seeds of corrupt disintegration seem to be bearing fruit in all too fertile a way. The novels end not just with personal disaster for the protagonists (only Beatrice Okoh in ‘**Ant-hills of the Savannah**’ is an exception), but with the passing of tribes, the hardening of colonial authority and the imposition of military rule. The redeeming factor in Achebe’s works is that, in spite of the corruption and brutality, there is an element of human goodness & moral sense inherent in humanity which cannot be eradicated, and which eventually must triumph.

In Achebe’s works the first note of estrangement from tribal ethos is heard from Nwoye in **Things Fall Apart**, where due to his disillusionment with Ibo life as he found it, he sets out in quest of more human concerns. Achebe tells us later that he finds refuge in the new religion, Christianity and the knowledge it offers. In a more advanced stage of this pursuit of knowledge as an accepted way of life, Obi embodies within himself extreme idealism and an intense sense of alienation from his roots. Both attitudes: estrangement and alienation, reflect a deep-seated inability to conform, and lead to gradual withdrawal into the self: more of an escape into inescapable realities than a solution. This passivity implies a very individualized form of revolt in the face of a moral crisis. The narrative here is engaged in a sustained, very controlled working out of the conflict inherent in the situation of a cultural clash, aggravated by an increased awareness in the individuals. It is the uncommon sensitivity to the surroundings and a tendency towards introspection embodied in the characters of Nwoye and Obi that makes for a radical shift in their approach to life. In the

case of Nwoye it is more of a personal anguish, but as one sees it in the wider perspective of the deep cultural interaction of Africa and the West, the issue is one of the irreconcilable nature of two warring ideals, one of synthesizing his traditional virtues with the new awareness he has acquired. The uncertainty and idealism of the moment is typified in Obi who faces the social impasse with its unresolved problems yet is explicitly representative of the emerging individual who is engaged in the dual task of severing himself from his tribal roots and integrating himself into a new social order.

A simultaneous growth towards an internalized perception of things and a reflective mode of existence, rather than the purely physical level is perceived even in the typically tribal characters of Okonkwo and Ezeulu. Initially, it is inconceivable for a society that had prided itself for centuries on its ancient wisdom, to permit any intrusive elements to create disruption in its confined world. And inevitably, when the change comes, it causes such violent hostility and frustration to Okonkwo, so much so, it costs him his life. Yet eventually, the tribe reveals itself vulnerable to the material promises that come to it in the form of intellectual pursuits and economic advancement and succumbs. But the next phase, encountered by Ezeulu suggests an explicit compromise with the alien forces, unlike the total rejection of the new order by Okonkwo; Ezeulu realizes that “the world is changing”, and his adaptability and acceptance of the European presence on the continent marks a significant departure from the Umuofian ethic upheld by Okonkwo. Again, whereas the enraged Okonkwo expels his son Nwoye from the family for giving himself to the missionaries, Ezeulu, with an unprecedented sense of reality, sends his son, “Oduche, to the Whiteman’s church to be his “eyes and ears” there (AOG : 151), lest he regrets later.

Achebe deploys a totally new technique of narration to capture this fresh awareness that results from Ezeulu’s unconventional moves specifically probing into the nature of the disapproval of the clan. Very insidiously, the criteria for success is changed from physical prowess and skill in warfare to knowledge of the ‘white man’s magic’ and response to the changing social reality. Tribal recognition and acclaim as the norm of judgment, so overtly pronounced in **Things Fall Apart**, very subtly gives way to a more inward-looking, personal kind of speculation, where individual claims and convictions supersede other preferences. Besides, through numerous instances of asserting his own worth and identity in a new perspective, the enigmatic character of Ezeulu himself stands poles apart from the world and values symbolized by Okonkwo.

The traits of individualism traced through Nwoye and Obi Okonkwo arises from the smoldering ashes of the dying Ibo clan. This new individual is caught in the collapse of values. Born in an `age which is slowly sacrificing its traditional values, to meet the demands of a new way of life, Obi feels helpless, for though he is aware of the old dignified order, he is thrust into the new. His problem is that he is not able to accommodate the contradictory ethical values of the two cultures. Obi’s is a case of double alienation, for his missionary upbringing and education only serve to cut him

away from his father's adopted religion, neither is he able to relate wholly to the complex living of the mid-twenties in Nigeria in spite of his modern education. Unlike the dignified and single-minded Okonkwo or Ezeulu, Obi is a naïve, selfish and vacillating character. This child of two worlds has a nostalgic memory of his noble ancestors which makes him impatient with the corruption and indignity of modern Nigeria. But Obi himself lacks the energy and will power to act competently about any crisis in his life, because his conviction about the justness of his position: ...comes from the periphery and not the center like the jerk of the leg of a deal frog when a current is applied to it (NLAE 124). Obi's moral weakness and warped sense of morality, which finally make him accept bribes, is the outcome of his failure to reconcile two conflicting demands – his loyalty to his clan and his position as a senior civil servant. The Umuofia Progressive Union to which Obi is indebted for his education, sums him up as a person who wishes to be associated with wise men of the past-but without making any personal sacrifice of commitments to his present-day clansmen.

You are very young, a child of yesterday. You know book. But book stands by itself and experience stands by itself. So, I am not afraid to talk to you (NLAE 74).

In Obierika's questioning of the meaning of some of the traditional Ibo values in Things Fall Apart, Achebe shows that even traditional values have to be revalued and updated according to the need of the time. What Achebe advocates is not a superimposition, but a successful adaptation of the old to the new, if the old is to survive. Nwoye's conversion perhaps illustrates the author's conviction that the only way for the future is cultural cohesion. This view of Achebe's is best summed up in the words of Jonathan Peters in **The Dance of Masks**:

Ideally Achebe would have wished for a gratifying of the best elements of African tradition with desirable elements from other cultures as a guarantee against the eruption of hate and violence which proved ultimately to be his country's colonial legacy (Peters 1978:125).

There emerge certain distinct patterns in the fiction of these writers which relate both to their vision and technique. Though Rand was popularly known as a Philosopher, she was first and foremost a writer of fiction. In all of Rand's works, the individual human is the most important being in the universe.

Rand in her book: **Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology** states that reason is the tool by which the individual discerns that which is 'Life-sustaining' and 'Ego-nourishing' (Rand 1979:21). Objectivist Ethics holds that man's life is the standard of value, and his own life is the ethical purpose of every individual man (Ibidem). It is interesting to find that Rand's major fictional works follow similar plot patterns. In each, an exceptionally able and individualistic protagonist, battles the power of collectivism and mediocrity, which are threatening to destroy the nation and the world.

Of Rand's five protagonists, three are women and two men. Almost all of them are drawn from real life experiences. The other characters, major and minor are male, and her insight into the workings of the male chauvinistic psychology, mental and emotional make-up is astounding. Her main female characters share many characteristics. They have slender physiques, defiant stances, and inner calm. Rand's heroes are all tall, straight and strong. Like their feminine counter parts, defiance is a keystone to their characters. Fear is never a part of their demeanor.

Love is a response to value for Rand, and hence the object of one's love is a representation of all that one holds dear. When Rand's characters love, they love without reservation. Just as a Randian personality will battle for that which he or she considers precious, a Rand character will do anything for a loved one. In **The Night of January 16th**, Karen Andre is willing to do anything for Bjorn Faulkner. She defies the law, engages in criminal acts and even permits Bjorn Faulkner to wed Nancy Whitfield, since that is what Bjorn Faulkner thinks is necessary to buttress his otherwise failing financial empire. She allows herself to be tried for his murder because she thinks she is helping him engineer a fake suicide. Leo's health is so important to Kira Argounova that she becomes Andrei's mistress as seen in **We the Living**. She does this so that she will have the money to send Leo to a sanatorium in the Crimea. Kira, who never lies, lies to both Andre and Leo, in order to save Leo's life and pride. She pretends that she loves Andre and lies to Leo about where she gets the money. Roark (in **The Fountainhead**) who is fiercely independent, openly acknowledges to Dominique how much she controls him. When she attempts to play power games with him, he shows her immediately that "she owns him – all that can be owned" (TFH31). His love for her is so great that he will not ask her to be his wife, because he knows that she cannot be whole until she comes to him with a healthy ego. He stands by when she marries Peter Keating and then Gail Wynand, enduring the pain, while she goes through her perverse penance. Gail Wynand explains to Dominique that "love is exception making" (TFH 321). He has broken every person of supposed integrity that he can find in order to prove his power. He tells her that she is in love with integrity and in his eyes is "a person who matches inside and out" (TFH 341). John Galt in **Atlas Shrugged** puts his life in danger to be with Dagny. Eventually his association with her results in his capture and consequent torture. Before the Government agents arrive, he tells her that he does not regret his action. Dagny claims: "I didn't care whether either one of us lived afterwards just to see you this once" (AS 865). The life worshipping Galt tells Dagny that he will kill himself rather than allow her to be tortured.

In the majority of Rand's fiction, another common occurrence is the trial scenes which act as a significant plot juncture. The most important trial in terms of plot structure, is towards Roark's arrangement for blowing up the Cortland Housing Project. His acquittal is evidence that justice can prevail and that the individual does not have to be destroyed. Hank Rearden's trial in **Atlas Shrugged** for defying an unfair government edict also results in his winning. In Rearden's case he contests the court's jurisdiction over him. In both of these trials, the accused act as their own defense

attorneys, and both their summation speeches are important statements of Rand's philosophy of personal rights. Since the juries agree with the accused in each case, one could infer that Rand has faith that an average dozen citizens will respond to reason and appreciate greatness. **The Night of January 16th** is a court room drama. The trial is the plot of this play. But whereas the trials in **The Fountainhead** and **Atlas Shrugged** demonstrate the value of the jury system, the trials in the former works are travesties of justice. When Equality 7-2521 does not confess where he has been he is sent to the Palace of Corrective Detention. Without a trial, and on the instruction of two judges, he is lashed repeatedly. Later his actions and invention are condemned by the ignorance of the World Council of Scholars. When Kira and Leo go to the People's Court to protest the fact that one of their rooms is taken from them, they are judged not in accordance with the merits of their case, but upon their ancestry. Instant recognition of the 'like-minded', is an ability shared by Rand's heroes and villains alike. Though Kira has never seen Leo before, she is willing to let him believe she is a prostitute rather than let him go out of her life. Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000 need only eye contact to establish a bond strong enough to make them defy their collective society. After minimal conversation she is sure enough of him to follow him into the Uncharted Forest.

In most of Rand's stories the first meeting of hero and heroine is accompanied by a rape-like encounter, which rather than distancing the couple, cements their relationship. Howard Roark's rape of Dominique establishes an unspoken bond, as neither speaks during the entire episode. Bjorn Faulkner rapes Karen Andre in **Night of January 16th**, when she comes for a job interview and she remains his business partner and mistress for the rest of his life. John Galt's first sexual experience with Dagny is a ritualized rape in the tunnels of Taggart Trans-Continental. For Rand, these romanticized rapes are symbolic of the head-on-clash of two strong personalities. The rapist is conquered just as his victim is. This symbolism of her rape scenes may be condemned by those who have a raised consciousness about the nature of rape.

Rand also uses a technique, traditional in Comedy and Allegory, by which character's names are indicators of their personalities. Such names as Wesley Mouch, Ellsworth Toohey, Homer Slotern carry strong suggestions of the bearer's offensive natures. There are, to be sure, many villains with neutral names such as Robert Stadler or James Taggart. However, even if the character has a handsome physical appearance and a neutral name, the reader is never left in doubt about Rand's attitude towards him or her. Rand's usual method of character introduction is a brief biographical sketch in which the individual's virtues or vices are clearly delineated. Though Pavel Syerov is described as nice looking, the reader is quickly informed that while he represents himself as a revolutionary hero, he actually stays at home during the war with a cold. Lillian Rearden, whose classic beauty fools Hank into thinking she is woman to strive for, turns empty eyes and a superficial gaiety on those who encounter her. Although she claims to love her husband, she does not appreciate his abilities.

Certain motifs recur in Rand's fiction. The flamboyant or extravagant gesture is one. Bjorn Faulkner gives Karen Andre a dress of platinum mesh; 'Guts' Regan sends her one pound of Orchids; Hank Rearden buys Dagny an exorbitantly priced pear-shaped ruby to wear for his eyes only; Dominique purchases a priceless sculpture of Helios from a museum and then destroys it because she considers it too beautiful for a world of 'second-handers'. For Rand's characters these gestures indicate freedom from monetary and mundane restraints.

Music also plays an important role in Rand's works. It symbolizes the creative and inspirational capacity of man. **We the Living** and **Atlas Shrugged** have the strongest musical components. For Kira, 'The Song of Broken Glass' a tune from an opera captures a sense of gaiety and joy, possible in life. Its promising notes echo in her brain as she dies. Richard Halley's unpublished fifth concerto echoes Dagny's search for the great minds that have vanished. Its triumphant strains reverberate in her head through much of the book. It is interesting to note that it is typical of Rand, she herself being a romantic realist. As Ayn Rand's body lay in state, light operetta music was played as the crowds paid her their last respects.

The setting of Rand's fiction needs a comment. Cities, especially those with a sky-scraper, skyline are the preferred settings for Rand's stories. Sky-scrapers serve as a positive symbol. They represent the potential of human conquest over nature. Rand is enamored by technology and the urban landscape. Kira's chosen profession is engineering. She keeps a picture of an American sky-scraper over her bed. Howard Roark's most important commission is the Wynand Building which towers over Hell's Kitchen in New York. When Dagny walks on the streets of New York, she is filled with reverence for the skyline. Rand is the antithesis of a primitivist. Her characters are not refreshed by interaction with nature. For them, nature is there to be harnessed.

In Rand's philosophy, the individual human is the most important being in the universe not God, Country, nor Cause precedes the Individual in Rand's hierarchy of values. The value that Rand places on the individual is clearly seen in Kira's affection for Andre. Though she hates communism, she sees Andre's worth as an individual and worries about him, expressing fear for his safety when he fights the rebellious farmers.

Whitfield the villainous banker who kills Bjorn Faulkner in **The Night of January 16th** states his credo on the witness stand: "I believed in one's duty above all. Bjorn Faulkner believed in nothing but his own pleasure" (NOJ 61). One of Rand's favourite techniques is this kind of dramatic irony where the speaker is trying to explain what is wrong with the character by his standards, and actually explains what is right with that character by Randian standards.

In Achebe's novels too, a thematic order or pattern can be traced through the five novels. The theme of the song of the traders in **No Longer at Ease**, about the world turned upside down, has its first relevance in **Things Fall Apart**. It reaches its climax in **Arrow of God** when the free poetic and collective spirit is sapped and replaced by a selfish and

corrupt system, which finds its full expression in Obi's acceptance of bribes in **No Longer at Ease**, which may be considered as the decline of the old way of life. The freezing death of the older order is seen in the shameless corruption and cynicism expressed in **A Man of the People** where Achebe depicts the anarchy that rules the Ibo society, it having lost all contact with the old ceremonious and ritualistic social order. The process of deterioration which begins with the breaking of communal life in **Things Fall Apart** reaches its final stage in **A Man of the People**, when a new government takes over, and the people see it as an alien institution to which they can cling as parasites, a far cry from the healthy communal life which created men like Okonkwo and Ezeulu. There is an absence of a center which will hold. Speaking of the degeneration of moral and spiritual values in Ibo life, Achebe explains that in the ancient days, titles were not given but taken and each title had its own value. He comments on how in the modern times, spiritually which would have controlled excess is rejected and materialism is retained. G.D Killiam, quoting Achebe in **The Novels of Chinua Achebe** says that Ibo Society,

has always been materialistic. This may sound strange because Ibo life had at the same time a strong spiritual dimension controlled by Gods, ancestors, personal spirits or Chi and magic. The success of the culture depends on the balance between the material and the spiritual ... Today we have kept the materialism and thrown away the spirituality which should keep it in check (Killiam 1969:155).

Disorientation is the price the modern Nigerian pays for rejecting the superstitions of his forefathers and embracing the rationalism of the new order. Quoting C.G. Jung, G.D. Killiam says the when spiritual values are exposed to the impact of the modern civilization in a primitive society, "it's people lose the meaning of their lives, their social organization disintegrates and they themselves morally decay" (Ibid: 157). It ends in isolation, alienation and lack of communication as in the case of the tragic heroes of Achebe.

If **A Man of the People** exposes the corrupting power of privilege and position and personal pleasure at the expense of the majority, **Anthills of the Savannah** reveals massive corruption, subservience to foreign manipulation, the problems of capitalism and

the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being (AOS 141).

The novel examines in an incisive way the fundamental issues relating to political leadership and also the position of women in modern African society. Using Ikem as his mouthpiece, Achebe gives his views on the theory of class and class struggle, and calls to question some of the basic tenets of Marxism, including the idea of a millennium in which there is no oppression of one social group by another, after the establishment of communism. Ikem sees the orthodox Marxist position as a simplistic remedy to the problem of oppression.

A socialist and communistic revolution cannot solve all social problems of a society. Achebe strongly believes that the only way to reform a corrupt society is by changing the corrupt leadership. In this novel he offers a kind of solution for determining the course of Nigerian history. Beatrice's role as priestess makes a significant contribution to the novel's examination of political leadership and sheds light on the ideology of leadership in the novel.

Achebe in his article "**The Trouble with Nigeria**", feels that Nigeria's problem is the result of its leader's unwillingness or inability to rise to the responsibilities and challenges of leadership. The lack of the hall-mark of true leadership, namely the challenge of personal example, has brought Nigeria to the brink of disaster. Nigerians are what they are, only because their leaders are not what they should be (TN 10). Through Ikem, Achebe shows how all social ills stem from its 'leaders'. Addressing the students, he says:

I have no desire to belittle your role in putting this nation finally on the road to self-redemption. But you cannot do that unless you first set about to purge yourselves, to clean up your act. You must learn for a start to hold your own student leaders to responsible performance; only after you have done that, can you have the moral authority to lecture the national leadership (AOS 160).

To Achebe, leadership implies responsible performance on the part of the individual. A leader should be able to create the circumstances in which the people begin to act with awareness. Leadership may be a privilege of the elite, but the latter who have been specially trained and educated should use their education to "initiate the upward movement of the people" (Rutherford, p.5). Beatrice interprets Chris's final message in the novel: This world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented (AOS 232). What Achebe advocates in **Anthills of the Savannah** is not democracy but perhaps an "enlightened dictatorship by the elite, and acceptable leadership style to re-establish vital inner links with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being" (AOS 141).

Thus, through the first four novels, Achebe clinically dissects the past of his society and traces a kind of psychic journey through the characters of Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Obi Okonkwo and Nanga, a downward path from stability to anarchy. It is a journey from the inspired and fulfilling rituals of the past to empty parodies of the present – a view which partly resembles (as Jonathan Peters tells us in **The Dance of Masks; Senghor, Achebe, Soyinka**.) "Yeats sphere with its two gyres or vortices as symbol of universal conflict" (Peters 1978:234) and partly mirrors **T.S. Eliot's** vision of the modern world as a moral and spiritual **wasteland**. It is,

... a down-to-earth exposition of the protracted fortunes of black Africa as the shape, size and focus of order have moved from clan to ethnic group and from nation to continent (Ibidem).

In his fifth novel, through Ikem, Chris and Beatrice, Achebe tries to re-establish order and stability.

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that Rand and Achebe's works are more than the works of social anthropologists. Rand explores the nature of man's mind, his ego and his reason. Rand believes that nothing existed and can exist outside the self. It is individuals who make society. To conceive of society in terms of an infinite mass of humanity, is to think of everyone in general and no one in particular. Achebe is a social anthropologist because of his interest in the socio-cultural patterns, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies of his clan. His interest stems from his study of the impact of one civilization upon another. In tracing the fall of the Ibo civilization through his fictional characters, Achebe succeeds in convincing the reader that, this which had happened to the Ibo clan in the past, is how the historical force works. Civilization is not static. It can collapse from within and be overpowered from without. The new order usually offers all that the old has overlooked, but even this new order must yield to another in course of time, for power and shift of power is an inevitable of historical determination.

The design and execution of Achebe's novels give a historical overview of the Ibo society from the pre-colonial era through the period of colonization to post-colonial Africa. Avoiding both the method of indulgence and flagellation, Achebe asserts the objective truth about the past of this tribe. He believes that nostalgia and remonstrance are both necessary, because "a people without a history is a people without a future" (Achebe, *The Novelist as Teacher*, 1965:2).

Achebe in his article "**African Literature as Restoration of Celebration**" shows how a literary artist can be nostalgic without sacrificing objectivity or realism. As a writer committed to social realism, he illustrates how disintegration of his society stems from the loss of allegiance to the religion and more of clan and ethnic group (Achebe, 1990:9). He also dwells on the lessons to be learnt from the ironies of human relation and the responsibilities of an individual to ensure a valuable legacy for the progeny.

Though the tribal ethos is to a certain extent replaced by urban reality, creating a new kind of web, almost vacuous, in which individuals try to search for their own identity, they are depicted as a threat to orthodoxy and their cries turn out to be nothing more than a voice wasted in the wilderness which, in effect, suggests that the society is not yet prepared to allow space for such extreme form of individualism.

Achebe and Rand reveal a pronounced similarity of purpose in their writings; at the same time, they provide rich contrasts in their points of view, ideas, characters and representation of reality. Like most of creative writers, they too have used the fictional form with explicit social commitments, yet one perceives a striking dissimilarity in their respective efforts to endow a changing ethical mood with new values. Achebe makes use of his creative genius with great insistence on the obligations of the African writer to his people, achieving a skilful balance and synthesis of aesthetics and didacticism. Rand moves further away from the typically traditional, to explore worlds and view outside its limited confines.

Rand perhaps the more innovative of the two regarding concepts, under-takes a bold experimentation in her fiction with an uncommon earnestness and unique vision. Her intention is not just to tell one more tale, but to create through ideas, an experience, that can be shared against a reawakening tradition, and its total effect evolves out of an aesthetic merging of characters, situations and episodes.

These writers combine an insight into human predicament with a mature social vision. The major shifts in the thinking patterns of their protagonists is viewed within the structural confines of a few selected creative works. These works also mark a steady eventual progression in the image of the emerging individual. It has been fascinating to watch how from a closed, self-contained, complacent world emerges a totally transformed being, reshaped and reformed through consistent conflicts and crises. Apart from exploring deep into the intricacies of the human psyche, the effective aesthetic apprehension of a transitional phase in history, compels us to subscribe totally to and reinforce a basic sociological notion that man does not simply react to his environment, but responds.

This study brings the researcher to the fundamental problem of how to combine that degree of individual imitative which is necessary for progress, with that degree of social cohesion that is necessary for survival. Bertrand Russell (in his book **Authority and the Individual**) discussing 'the role of the individual' observes that as men grow more civilized, there is an increasing differences between one man's activities and another's. A community needs, if it is to prosper, a certain number of individuals who do not wholly conform to the general type. Practically all progress, Russell observes, artistic, moral and intellectual has depended on such individuals who have been a decisive factor in the transition from barbarism to civilization (Russell 1985:48). As Hubert Bonner observes: "if a society is to progress there must be a quaint blend of the Hellenic and Hebraic view of man" (quoted by Jaideep Singh in **The Humanistic View of Man**, 1979).

The researcher realizes that the need of the day is socio-cultural cohesion, that is, a successful grafting of the two best elements of the individual and the society. In other words, Rand's concept of the ideal self should be grafted with Achebe's concept of a truly meaningful communal living. In every society, there are individual creators and the society needs men of such integrity and caliber to redeem it. If Prometheus had not stolen fire from the Gods, man might have been starving today. Rand advocates a society which she depicts in "Atlantis"- an ideal Utopian society of Demi-gods – that is men created in the image and likeness of God. Rand believes that this is not beyond man's aspirations: as "Man also Rises" (TFH i).

But Chinua Achebe in "**The Nature and Fulfilment of the Individual**" observes that a Westerner would be most reluctant to destroy in a page or two, her angel and paragon of perfection, the individual hero. And if he has to be destroyed, then it has got to be justified by final impressive speeches. An illustration of it is best seen in the long speeches of Howard Roark and John Galt in **The Fountainhead** and **Atlas Shrugged** respectively. But

Achebe does not have these obligations, because in his scheme and hierarchy, the human hero is not even near the top. He is subordinate to his community to begin with, even when he is their leader and priest. But even more important his hero is subject to non-human forces in the universe. To powers inhabiting that order of reality, the individual counts for nothing, and if he has to fall, one is not entitled to stretch it out or give explanations. The ideal to be sought in Achebe's view is the one which combines freedom for the individual and the safety of society. A society which represses the individual spirit, will rapidly degenerate into mediocrity. But without society there can be no meaningful individuality to exercise, and no civilization. The individual needs his fellows for his survival and sanity (Achebe 1983:163). In other words, every culture that truly desires excellence will have to redress the balance between the two realities of individual freedom and social responsibility in accordance with the excesses of its own past practices. Those that have sat too heavily on the individual will have to restore liberty to him, and those that have denounced ties of social responsibility, must learn that without ties there can be no fulfilment in the complex conditions of modern life (Ibidem).

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