

JEFFERSON JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

The scholarly publication from Jefferson Scholars Foundation

Issue 3, 2013

“To see differently in this way for once, to want to see differently, is no small discipline”



Jefferson Scholars Foundation

JEFFERSON JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

Issue 2, 2013

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Acknowledgements: The Editorial Board would like to thank the staff of the Jefferson Scholars Foundation, as well as the Jefferson Fellows for their support in creating this publication. We would also like to thank our peer reviewers, and our proofreader Melissa Maki.

JEFFERSON JOURNAL OF SCIENCE & CULTURE

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Jefferson Scholars Foundation

Jefferson Journal of Science and Culture

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Mystique of the Intellectual: Heroes of Ayn Rand's Dystopias and the Ron Paul Revolution

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This article explores and correlates attributes of intellectual mystique as expressed in Ayn Rand's fiction and in Ron Paul's political campaigns. Rand's literature provided much of the narrative background of the libertarian movement, and her individualist philosophy later played a strong—though often tacit—intellectual role in Paul's libertarian revolution, which culminated in his 2011-12 presidential campaign. The symmetry between Paul's revolution and predominant themes in Ayn Rand's suppositional dystopias contributes to their mystique, leading in some cases to the fictionalization of fact, and in others, the reification of fiction. Mystique thereby operates as a nexus between fact and fiction. This analysis will exposit 'knowledge inflation,' 'funneling,' and 'prediction-fulfillment' as three vehicles by which intellectual mystique is constructed in Ayn Rand's heroes and Ron Paul's revolution.

Mystique characterizes an ideal whose allure lacks thorough rationale. It is both an epistemological and phenomenological category, describing the desire for an object which is to some extent mystery-dependent, implying contingency on an epistemic gap between the actual and the ideal, the factual and the fictional, the observed and the imaginary. The manifold political cultivations of 'mystique' in the United States¹ often involve cooperative efforts between a politician and his or her supporters to formulate an enchanting public image of the politician and associated campaign or movement—what John Corner names 'mediated persona.'² For some, politics offers the opportunity to participate in a mass mission toward an idealized goal that transcends ordinary life, and in the most extreme revolutions, surreal expectations invited totalitarian regimes in which masses invested their

¹ Betty Friedan's seminal *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is especially important in the conceptualization of mystique in American sociopolitical history, but not entirely relevant here.

² John Corner, 'Mediated Persona and Political Culture,' in *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*, ed. John Corner and Dick Pels (Sage, 2003), 67.

hope for that utopia.³ The effervescence that results from such features of political movements is salient among no small number of Ron Paul supporters, and is only augmented by the intellectual mystique generated through Paul's confluence with Ayn Rand's themes, plots, and characters. (There seems, however, little evidence to suggest that Paul saw himself as an embodiment of any Randian hero, or that he tailored his campaign according to Randian ideals. Nonetheless, the philosophical, political, and economic narrative of the revolution retains an intimate association with the spirit, mood, and rhetoric of Rand's literature.)

Randian Heroes and Their Mystique

For Ayn Rand, fiction complements fact. In *The Romantic Manifesto* (1975), she argued that 'Art is a concretization of metaphysics' which 'brings man's concepts to the perceptual level of his consciousness and allows him to grasp them directly, as if they were percepts.'⁴ Art is, in short, conceptual metaphor.⁵ A hero for Rand, then, is the ultimate expression of humankind's loftiest virtues; he or she embodies an admirer's ideal principles, and possesses maximal skill in actualizing those principles, especially toward his or her self-determined goal. Heroes who possess the best ability in their respective fields or toward their specific purposes are unique; they are the victors in the achievement of human potential in their talent domains. Love and admiration are the natural results for observers, as love is 'our response to our highest values,'⁶ expressed in another person. Furthermore, commensurate with classical understandings of heroism, their philosophical actions and influence 'could save the world.'⁷

In case the ideal lies beyond the actual capacity of the hero, such as those originating from legends, myths, and other types of fiction, the admirer may superimpose the ideal onto

³ For a more developed view of this process see Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Sovereignty: God, State, Self* (2008).

⁴ Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature*, rev. ed. (New York: New American Library, 1975), 19.

⁵ For a developed theory of conceptual metaphor, see for example Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980).

⁶ Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: The New American Library, 1957). The pagination used in this article follows the 1992 edition. Love is a response to the 'expression of your greatest values in another person,' as Leonard Piekoff, Rand's designated philosophical heir, articulated.

⁷ The character Hugh Akston in Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* speculates that his authorship of a book on rationality, the mind, and morality 'could save the world.'

the hero especially commensurate with the hero's charisma.⁸ Rand's fiction and philosophy, together even with the facts of her own biography, are conducive to the veneration both of real and imaginary heroes. Rand comfortably employed mythical language and themes to describe such figures, conceiving 'God' and 'spirit' as expressing the maximization of talent, creativity, and productivity, just as fiction uses abstractions and metaphors to represent the factual. Her novels and essays allude amply to Greek gods and titans as well as historical legends. Rand's repertoire includes also the philosophy of those Hellenic ancients, especially that of Aristotle, whom Rand identifies as her primary philosophical influence. Accordingly, all of Rand's heroes exhibit a refined rationality, and their mystique is consistently intellectual.⁹

In the more dramatic cases, the hero exhibits qualities that the admirer has not or cannot actualize. Such a disparity in knowledge or skill distinguishes ideal and actual, hero and admirer, resulting in the attribution of some exclusive talent to the hero often labeled 'charisma' or 'mystique.' Within this nebula, fictional and factual heroes can lend their attributes to one another, prompting admirers to endow a real leader with legendary traits, and thus dubbing the leader uniquely qualified for such a role—a confluence and singularity often seen in American politics, and manifest recently, as we shall see, in the culture of support for the presidential campaign of Congressman Ron Paul.

Intellectual Mystique in Ayn Rand's Fiction

The formulation of the Rand's intellectual hero began when the nine-year-old Alisa Rosenbaum encountered Maurice Champagne's *The Mysterious Valley*.¹⁰ In the plot of this children's story, British colonial soldiers begin to disappear, sometimes dragged away by tigers and assumed dead. Among the missing, is an enigmatic captain, Cyrus Paltons. A small band of soldiers deign to expose the cause of this conspiracy, and their adventures reveal

⁸ Charisma is often associated with mystique, but it does not always include the component of mystery or an epistemic gap.

⁹ Rand made no secret of her intellectual self-image; in a 1978 interview on *The Tomorrow Show*, she recollected that as a youth she was 'very [smart]. I went to two different schools in two different cities and I was the top student there.'

¹⁰ Rand encountered this novel as a series in the magazine *L'Écolier illustré*, the first installment of which was published on May 14, 1914. In the 1994 translation in English by Atlantean Press, Objectivist philosopher Harry Binswanger introduces the story and traces several Randian themes and heroes to it.

that captain Paltons is alive. Cyrus then emerges as the intrepid, autonomous victor of the saga. The young Alisa, overwhelmed with admiration for this fictional legend, then ‘knew I could never marry a normal man. I could only marry a hero.’¹¹ Cyrus would become the prototype for all of Rand’s own literary heroes; even his gallant physique would be projected onto the characters, beginning with Kira (named after Cyrus) in *We The Living* (1936), the first of her four novels.

When Alisa was twelve years old, her father’s pharmacy was confiscated and absorbed into the Bolshevik collective. Her entire intellectual career may be regarded as a response to that event, in which the honorably won fruits of her father’s skill and effort were sacrificed on the altar of the commune. Rand’s purpose and method for developing her egoistic ethics was, in biographer Jennifer Burns’ words, to ‘eliminate all virtues that could possibly be used in the service of totalitarianism.’¹² Owing to her infatuation with Cyrus, the young philosopher instinctually used literature as her medium; as she would later explain, artistic expression is optimal ‘for the communication of a moral ideal.’¹³

The purpose of her philosophy and her novels would thus be ‘to define and present the image of an ideal man.’¹⁴ To meet this task she conjoined the passionate mythology with the sober philosophy of the ancient Hellenes. Many episodes in her novels are neatly staged so that the heroes have multiple opportunities to launch into philosophical monologues. The villains caricature Rand’s social and political enemies at their most sinister. The scenes are so contrived that even casual readers may find difficulty meaningfully connecting the novel with reality, although this disjunction may further contribute to the mystical nature of

¹¹ Inasmuch as *The Mysterious Valley* illustrates ‘romantic realism,’ Ayn Rand would fasten rationality with sensuality in *Atlas Shrugged* (p. 490): ‘A man’s sexual choice is the result and the sum of his fundamental convictions. Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life.’

¹² Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

¹³ Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto*, 21. She also wrote in a letter to a friend, ‘It’s time we realize—as the Reds do—that spreading our ideas in the form of fiction is a great weapon, because it arouses the public to an emotional, as well as intellectual response to our cause.’

¹⁴ From her interview with University of Michigan professor of psychology James McConnel on University of Michigan Television, Jan. 1, 1961.

Rand's romantic realism.¹⁵ 'It is this chiaroscuro of light and dark—virtuous individuals battling a villainous state—that makes her compelling to some readers and odious to others.'¹⁶

As did Champagne with Cyrus, Rand often enticed readers with intellectual mystique as a literary strategy, most famously through John Galt, the paragon of her Objectivist schema who dominates her pinnacle opus, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957); Galt is the hero at Rand's full philosophical and literary maturation.¹⁷ His mystique draws the novel's protagonist, Dagny Taggart, to the climactic finale of the second section. As in *The Mysterious Valley*, important figures have disappeared, but in *Atlas Shrugged* a broader array of professionals—the most successful and productive members of society—are among the missing. At the end of Part II, Dagny fast approaches the full disclosure of Galt's identity as the leader of this strike; she has been following Quentin Daniels' plane deep into an unknown region of Colorado's Rocky Mountains when she observes the craft disappearing beneath a ridge, where 'there was no possible place for a landing.'¹⁸ Choosing to believe Quentin was privy to some secret component of the terrain, Dagny continues the pursuit, even though her senses indicate that there is nothing but the jagged mountainside ahead. The pursuit becomes a matter of trust and supposition. When she gets close enough for an imminent collision with the mountains, they subside with a flash of light to a verdant ravine. At that moment, however, her plane begins swirl and rattle chaotically, and as she plunges to her likely death, Dagny arrives at a sudden uncanny certainty that she would survive and exclaims internally, 'Oh hell! Who is John Galt?' The question of death becomes for Dagny 'her mockery at fate, her cry of defiance' expressed in 'defeat, despair, and a plea for help.'¹⁹

¹⁵ Ayn Rand aficionados will quickly note that Rand devotes many pages in many contexts to the repudiation of mysticism, which she defines as the rejection of reason and observation in favor of the unknowable and irrational. Rand evidently permits mystery in her romantic realism as a literary device that suspends knowledge and reason, albeit temporarily. Insofar as her plots fuse mystery and heroism in this manner, they may be rightly described as mystical, and her heroes as exhibiting mystique.

¹⁶ Burns, *Goddess of the Market*, 3.

¹⁷ Connections between John Galt and Cyrus Paltons, Rand's first hero and fictional love interest, are well-known. For further study on the development of the Galt character, see Shoshana Milgram's fine 2009 essay, 'Who Was John Galt? The Creation of Ayn Rand's Ultimate Ideal Man' in Robert Mayhew (ed). *Essays on Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged*. New York: Lexington Books, 53-78.

¹⁸ *Atlas Shrugged*, 639.

¹⁹ *Atlas Shrugged*, 640.

Rand's description here resembles the desperate supplication and unction of a devotee to an invisible hero. The tone and structure of this episode reflect experiences of transcendence such as religious conversion, near-death experiences, and leaps of faith, the affective power of which results from risking or committing one's life to the pursuit of an enticing unknown. This mystery is personal; the source of Dagny's mystification is an enigmatic agent. Elsewhere in the text Galt almost relishes in his own mystique before the baffled Head of the State, Mr. Thompson: 'I can't figure you out,' he said. 'I just can't figure you out.' Galt smiled, shrugged and answered, 'Who is John Galt?'²⁰

Rand's Heroism and Paul's Revolution

This relationship between actual and ideal also approximates Ron Paul's allure. In a direct correlation with John Galt, one supporter describes T-shirts designed for Paul's 1988 presidential campaign that read 'Who Is Ron Paul?'²¹ Many of his enthusiasts can recall a moment at which they were mystified by his unique personality and charisma. *Reason* magazine editor Brian Doherty, for example, recounts Paul's exchange with Rudy Giuliani in 2008 over the appropriateness of blaming American foreign policy for the 9/11 'blow-back' on the World Trade Center;²² the typical politician, Doherty notes, might reconsider his own lack of national pride, but what Giuliani labels patriotism Paul considers jingoism. Ron Paul not only maintained his ground in that debate, but also elaborated on the position.²³

It is evident that Paul is versed in and thinks, to some degree, in the narrative terms of the dystopian genre. He sometimes compares expansions in government oversight of private lives to those of jeremiads such as Huxley's *A Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*.²⁴ Ayn Rand's work seems especially to have influenced Paul; he astutely read Ayn Rand's *Objectivist* periodicals in the 1960s and 70s, and knew personally a number of economists and

²⁰ *Atlas Shrugged*, 1012.

²¹ According to supporter Chris Lawless; see Alex Altman, 'The Prophet' in *Time*, Sept. 5, 2011.

²² Brian Doherty, *Ron Paul's rEVOLution: The Man and the Movement He Inspired* (Broadside Books, 2012), 1-2.

²³ On some occasions, Paul's uncompromising resilience in the face of political inquisition resembles that of Howard Roark's famous solitary defense during his trial in *The Fountainhead*. Paul's audacity, like Roark and Galt's, mystifies both supporters and opponents.

²⁴ See for example Ron Paul, *Liberty Defined* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2012), xiii, 10, and 279.

politicians who corresponded with Rand and admired her work.²⁵ Paul occasionally quoted Rand in political speeches, and even celebrated her centennial on the floor of the House of Representatives: ‘So much of what has made America a great society is found in her writings.’²⁶

The consistency with which Paul has maintained his political and economic positions over the course of his three-decade political career also reflects the philosophical consistency of Rand. Paul explains in *End the Fed* (2009) the early origins of his views from working with his brothers on his parents’ dairy farm. They learned intimately the practice of receiving (and negotiating for) labor compensation. One especially teachable moment from his youth wherein he proposed to his older brother a solution to poverty: simply mint and print more currency for the underprivileged to spend. The brother’s pithy response—that this practice would render currency worthless²⁷—could not be contested, and this reasoning behind the preservation of monetary value formed the basis for Paul’s unwavering neo-liberal economic position.

Similarly, Rand had correlated the prosperity of a nation with the degree to which it had adopted capitalism, which in turn depended on the freedom of its individuals.²⁸ In *Atlas Shrugged*, for example, Mr. Thompson refers Galt to a stack of petitions and letters from children, religious leaders, mothers, and the disabled, begging Galt and the government for help. They fail to persuade or even to budge Galt, who recalls Hank Rearden, a businessman who was manipulated and blackmailed by looters and cronies. Galt declines to ‘follow their blindness’ and points to the irony of helping those who admire his intelligence ‘by dropping my intelligence.’²⁹ Chris Sciabarra explains in his research on the book:

When ‘need,’ rather than ability, becomes a criterion for the acquisition of values, it sets off a degenerative social process in which the ‘needs’ of some place a moral claim on the lives of

²⁵ See Ron Paul, *End the Fed* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009), 62.

²⁶ *Congressional Record: Extensions of Remarks*, February 2, 2005. Available online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2005-02-02/pdf/CREC-2005-02-02-pt1-PgE141-3.pdf>.

²⁷ Paul, *End the Fed*, 35. See also David Halbfinger, ‘The Long Run: Ron Paul’s Flinty Worldview was Forged in Early Family Life,’ *The New York Times*, February 5, 2012.

²⁸ Ayn Rand, ‘Requiem for Man,’ in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (Signet, 1986), 308. This text was originally published in 1967.

²⁹ *Atlas Shrugged*, 1020.

others. This is the evil of altruism, says Rand; it becomes a pretext for oppressing the most creative individuals in society.³⁰

Likewise, Paul opposes the ‘Robin Hood’ ethic of tapping the wealth of the rich to assist the impoverished. Theft as a means is not justified by its social egalitarian end, and Paul calls into question whether that a government ‘handout’ is at all positive in the first place. His supporters, affirming this line of reasoning, circulated around the web a photo of Ron Paul at his desk with a sign in the foreground that reads ‘Don’t steal; the government hates competition’.

In *The Revolution: A Manifesto* (2009), Paul bemoans governmental ‘looting of Americans’ and refers to assistance programs as ‘the distribution of loot.’ Income tax is ‘loot’ because, in comparison to the military draft, it imposes governmental ownership of citizens’ productivity in the same way the military draft expresses ownership of citizens’ bodies.³¹ Paul use the Randian term on several more occasions throughout the book. In *Liberty Defined* (2011), Rand’s polar vocabulary is even more conspicuous; ‘the justly rich are being looted,’³² ‘organized thugs’ distributed ‘the looted wealth of the country,’ a habit which ‘undermines the creative genius of free minds.’ Consequentially, ‘the producers are rebelling,’³³ alluding perhaps to the actualization of the plot of *Atlas Shrugged*: the ‘mind on strike.’

Rand’s influence on Paul and his followers is little surprise, given the demographic confluence of her readers and Paul’s supporters. Her literature, in Burns’ observation, ‘is still devoured by eager young conservatives, cited by political candidates, and promoted by corporate tycoons.’³⁴ Political analysts have noted Paul’s possession of the populist and individualist charisma of which his opponents are deficient.³⁵

³⁰ Chris Matthew Sciabarra, ‘Atlas Shrugged: Manifesto for New Radicalism,’ in *Atlas Shrugged: A Philosophical and Literary Companion*, ed. Edward Younkens (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 28.

³¹ Ron Paul, *The Revolution: A Manifesto* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009), 4, 78; see also 66, 70, 76-77, 106-7, 144, and 159.

³² Paul, *Liberty Defined*, xiv.

³³ Paul, *Liberty Defined*, xvii.

³⁴ Burns, *Goddess of the Market*, 4. Among the most salient of businessmen is John Allison IV, erstwhile CEO of BB&T and consistent Objectivist both in belief and practice.

³⁵ See e.g. Howard Fineman, ‘Is There a Doctor in the House? Ron Paul, the GOP’s unlikely savior’ in *Newsweek*, Dec. 3, 2009.

Despite Rand's strong philosophical influence on Paul, he rarely mentions her in his speeches and literature,³⁶ preferring instead to reinforce his libertarian sentiments with the words of founding fathers, national heroes, and respected political leaders. He may also distance himself from direct reference because of 'strong disagreements with her on important matters.'³⁷

Nevertheless, her narrative fingerprints speckle Paul's political philosophy and rhetoric. Paul readily affirms that his revolution transcends politics: 'What is going on today is not a partisan revolution; it's a philosophic revolution to change the hearts and mind and philosophy of the American people...'³⁸ In the words of supporter Robin Koerner, Paul's primacy of liberty 'is a philosophical one. It precedes politics—and that is why it allows Paul to transcend the bankrupt left-right paradigm.'³⁹ Paul echoes Rand's view that individuals should be liberated 'as rational beings ... trying to achieve our goals through reason and persuasion rather than threats and coercion,' and that this view of human beings 'is the primary moral reason for opposing government intrusions into our lives: government is force, not reason.'⁴⁰ Rand had articulated through John Galt, 'Force and mind are opposites; morality ends where a gun begins.'⁴¹

Both Paul and Rand credit the Austrian free-market economist Ludwig von Mises with profound influence on their thought.⁴² Among Mises' most emphatic arguments was

³⁶ Her novels appear regularly in his recommended reading lists, however.

³⁷ Likely related to religion and some social issues such as abortion. See Paul, *The Revolution*, 190.

³⁸ Ron Paul, Speech at the Campaign for Liberty Rally in Orlando, Florida, August 7, 2009, 5:16-25 on the clip uploaded by user BigGalloofToBoot entitled 'RonPaulOne,' available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YCNDTzM8hg> (accessed September 23, 2012).

³⁹ Robin Koerner, 'Ron Paul and the Love Revolution of 2012,' *The Huffington Post*, May 13, 2011. Available online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robin-koerner/ron-paul-and-the-love-rev_b_861399.html (accessed Sept. 23, 2012). Koerner continues, 'I can only hope that my adoptive countrymen will take their astonishing opportunity to choose not just a political revolutionary, but also a philosophical one.' He publishes with WatchingAmerica.com.

⁴⁰ Paul, *The Revolution*, 5. As an important historical note, the elevation of 'reason' preceded Rand by nearly two centuries, having dominated 18th century Enlightenment philosophy, one of whose political products was the foundation of the United States. Rand's contribution used the Aristotelian model of the person as a 'moral agent' to contravene the collectivist movements of the 20th century.

⁴¹ *Atlas Shrugged*, 936.

⁴² Burns (*Goddess of the Market*, 142) reports Ayn Rand's remark that 'I don't agree with him epistemologically but as far as my economics and political economy are concerned, Ludwig von Mises is the most important thing that's ever happened to me.'

that government intervention in currencies and markets occludes the real value of goods and commodities, such that true prices could not be calculated, which Rand duplicated structurally to say that ‘under altruism, no moral calculations are possible.’⁴³ Accordingly, through Judge Narragansett at the finale of *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand suggests a constitutional amendment, which Ron Paul already considers implicit in the Constitution, insisting on a separation of commerce and state in the same syntax as the Bill of Rights’ establishment clause: ‘Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of production and trade.’⁴⁴

Like Paul, Rand saw little difference between the conservatives and liberals of American politics, who both used the government to impose their will on the individual—conservatives in lifestyle and liberals in finance—and who both used some form of collectivism as justification. Republicans and Democrats alike threaten to magnify bureaucracy to levels resembling the Soviet Union. Paul echoes this comparison on multiple occasions. He summarized that, ‘... our system is falling apart, just like the communist system fell apart—that was the biggest news of the twentieth century: the failure of communism, because it was a bad idea.’⁴⁵

As with Rand’s heroes, Paul’s unwavering audacity to oppose perceived established norms often isolates him from his colleagues both on the left and on the right; ‘We are dangerous to the status quo of this country.’⁴⁶ Doherty writes that Paul’s political philosophy ‘includes at least one belief that’s going to drive nearly every American crazy.’⁴⁷ Indeed, Ron Paul’s unique consistency, maverick enthusiasm, and rebellious demeanor has roused the libertarian base and inspired what has truly become a ‘revolution.’

⁴³ Originally from Ludwig von Mises’ 1935 *Socialism* and the catalogue of Ayn Rand’s notes, 033-19A, cited in Burns, *Goddess of the Market*, 142.

⁴⁴ *Atlas Shrugged*, 1069.

⁴⁵ Ron Paul, ‘Ron Paul Message to Supporters,’ Speech delivered in 2012. 5:50-6:08, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOHIN5JWsw8> (uploaded by user ronpaul on June 15, 2012; accessed Sept. 23, 2012), continuing that ‘what we’re in the middle of right now is the failure of Keynesianism, the failure of central banking, failure of fiat money, failure of authoritarianism’ (6:08-18).

⁴⁶ Ron Paul, speech at a rally in Concord after placing second in New Hampshire’s primary on January 10, 2012. Uploaded by PBSNewsHour at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Da6irSCvnZY> (accessed Sept. 23, 2012).

⁴⁷ Doherty, *Ron Paul’s rEVOLution*, 12.

Enthusiasm among Paul Supporters

Paul's mystique, as a product of his embodiment of Randian heroism, contributes to an explanation for the enthusiasm of his supporters. For his most devout fans, Ron Paul's mind is uniquely vested with the wisdom required to articulate, inspire, and legislate the libertarian revolution. Some compiled and shared through the web over two dozen qualities that make Ron Paul extraordinary: he 'is the only candidate who doesn't support the Patriot Act,' 'the only candidate who predicted the housing bubble and financial collapse,' and 'the only GOP candidate who is a protestant Christian.'⁴⁸ Certainly, his consistently radical positions combined with his longevity and establishment in Congress make him uniquely poised as a viable revolutionary contender for the presidency.

His campaign slogan 'Restore America Now,' signals Paul as the vanguard who will return America to its idealized, pristine, revolutionary principles of liberty and independence. Supporters have even circulated a two-tone effigy of Ron Paul's face, stylized like that of Obama in 2008 and (with no small irony) that of Che Guevara decades earlier.

Other panegyrics are easily located among supporter sites. From only one post on *The Daily Paul*, user comments exalt him as a national hero: Ron Paul is 'the greatest American since Thomas Jefferson.'⁴⁹ Paul's birthday 'should be a national holiday: Liberty Day.'⁵⁰ And, most graphically, 'Dr. Ron Paul will go down in history as the man that started the movement that restored the Constitution. He deserves a place on Mt Rushmore next to our Founding Fathers.'⁵¹ Other supporters venerate him as a kind of messiah: 'God sent us a blessing 77 years ago. God smiles on his gift to the world, will this wicked world reject his gift?'⁵² And, more mystically, 'The Luminance of Liberty has shone bright for 77yrs...'⁵³

⁴⁸ myajace, July 8, 2012, *Daily Paul*, <http://www.dailypaul.com/243646/dr-ron-paul-is-the-only-candidate> (accessed Sept. 23, 2012).

⁴⁹ DagnyT, August 20, 2012, *Daily Paul*, <http://www.dailypaul.com/comment/2679028> (accessed September 22, 2012).

⁵⁰ Momtokippy, August 20, 2012, *Daily Paul*, <http://www.dailypaul.com/comment/2678881> (accessed September 22, 2012).

⁵¹ Pkristopher, August 21, 2012, *Daily Paul*, <http://www.dailypaul.com/comment/2679111> (accessed September 22, 2012).

⁵² freedomordeath, August 20, 2012, *Daily Paul*, <http://www.dailypaul.com/comment/2678662> (accessed September 22, 2012).

⁵³ RaulPon, August 20, 2012, *Daily Paul*, <http://www.dailypaul.com/comment/2678745> (accessed September 22, 2012).

One also finds among Paul's supporters Randian intellectual principles undergirding the emotional components of the movement, such as Rand's egoist formulation of love. The Ron Paul campaign adopted an image of the word 'Revolution' that frames the reverse word 'love' nested within it, originally designed by libertarian Ernie Hancock in reference to the 'love of liberty.' With similar justification to Ayn Rand's account of love and personal autonomy, one supporter interprets: 'Love says to its object, 'As you wish,' and a Paul presidency would say to its citizens just that: It's not government's job to decide for you. Your life should be as you wish.'⁵⁴

The libertarian Love-Revolution against America's imperialist foreign policy has even been compared to that of Gandhi's civil disobedience of British imperialism.⁵⁵

Constructing Mystique, the Nexus between Fact and Fiction in Ron Paul's Revolution

A number of commentators have pronounced not only the uniqueness of Paul's consistent libertarianism (even amid a party switch), but also Paul's uncanny ability to overcome political odds, surprising both followers and detractors at his success. Defying the traditional 'two-party' system, his voting record does not fit neatly into either a Republican nor a Democratic platform; he opposes abortion, for example, but also opposes a federal ban on the procedure, since Paul believes any criminal consequences for abortion—like those for murder—should be handled at the state level. He is unyielding to special interests and appears to have run his campaigns without the slightest hint of financial foul play. By many accounts, Paul is a political rarity.

In order to explore further the role of mystique in Ron Paul's revolution, we now examine three vehicles by which the ideals in Randian heroes are connected to Ron Paul's public presence, resulting in the presidential candidate's reason-transcending allure. The

⁵⁴ Robin Koerner, 'Ron Paul and the Love Revolution of 2012,' in *The Huffington Post*, May 13, 2011. Available online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robin-koerner/ron-paul-and-the-love-rev_b_861399.html (accessed Sept. 23, 2012). Koerner publishes with WatchingAmerica.com.

⁵⁵ Bob Murphy, 'Keeping the Love in the rEVOLution' on self-described 'anarcho-capitalist' LewRockwell's blog, Nov. 17, 2007. Online at <http://www.lewrockwell.com/murphy/murphy128.html> (accessed on Sept. 23, 2012). Murphy is a consultant with a background in economics; the full quote reads, 'Ron Paul's supporters want to dissolve the 'American empire.' Well Gandhi was able to defeat the British Empire through civil disobedience and appealing to the conscience of the powerful. The same approach can work here.'

analysis will reveal how Paul, his supporters, and Randian heroes contribute to respective combinations of fact and fiction. The ways in which Randian narratives and Ron Paul's presidential campaign have together constructed Paul's mystique as a revolutionary leader are identified as knowledge inflation, funneling, and prediction-fulfillment.

Knowledge Inflation

Intelligence seems among the most common manifestations of mystique. Knowledge inflation entails the cultivation of renown, often coupled with the use of status symbols or lofty titles, to represent expertise or authority in a field of knowledge. This prompts individuals not only to withhold criticism, but to attribute to the leader authority over most or all other relevant areas in which he may exhibit little or no mastery; followers assume that giftedness in one field implies giftedness in several. Observation of competence in one skill evokes, for example, the label 'smart' and the assumption of intelligence in or mastery over several other fields, proceeding then to place our trust in his insight and guidance therein.

Although Rand cautions against appeals to authority, in many respects Rand's literature reinforces this conjunction. Her Objectivist philosophy reduces all forms of intelligence to rationality, understood strictly as the ability to mediate all thoughts and impressions through a dispassionate and impartial logically deductive filter. 'Check your premises' is a recurring maxim in *Atlas Shrugged* and in Rand's later writing as a response to failed projects and business endeavors.⁵⁶ 'Contradictions do not exist,' claims Francisco d'Anconia, one of the great heroes of *Atlas Shrugged*; 'Whenever you think that you are facing a contradiction, check your premises. You will find that one of them is wrong.'⁵⁷

Rand prefers philosophical terminology with such force that it supersedes even technical and scientific language; in describing, for example, the schematic of a motor innovated by an anonymous genius, 'you can see what premise he's speaking from,'⁵⁸ even

⁵⁶ Two heroes of *Atlas Shrugged* (Francisco d'Anconia and his teacher Hugh Akston) speak this line, often occurring with the denial the contradictions exist 'by the essence and nature of existence.' See also Rand's 1961 *For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Random House), 3.

⁵⁷ *Atlas Shrugged*, 188.

⁵⁸ *Atlas Shrugged*, 330.

though ‘model,’ ‘theory,’ ‘hypothesis,’ or even ‘paradigm’ are more appropriate to science and engineering. Deduction, for Rand, usurps even the rigorous inductive methods of experimentation. ‘All work is an act of philosophy,’⁵⁹ because innovation, productivity, talent, and free trade are the ‘practical expression’ of reason.⁶⁰ Reason is normative and universally applicable, despite objections from ‘modern intellectuals’ who exude ‘militant uncertainty, crusading cynicism, dogmatic agnosticism, boastful self-abasement and self-righteous depravity.’⁶¹ Skill or mastery in one endeavor evinces a rationally actualized core, which endows the capacity to master others.⁶²

If one adopts the association that talent in one area implies talent in others, an expert in one subject may thereby become the lens through which followers interpret multiple subjects, the metanarrative under which all narratives are subsumed, reduced, and defined, such that even if the leader’s analysis in a peripheral subject is demonstrably weak, flawed, or irresponsible, it is nevertheless trusted (if only for the sake of simplicity or centralization). Sufficient for influence, then, is not the actual possession of broad knowledge or insight, but rather the display of enough knowledge to give the impression of breath to disciples and prospective followers—the ‘inflation’ of knowledge. In reality, however, specialists are not always expert generalists; grandmasters in chess are sometimes poor mathematicians, brilliant scientists are sometimes sophomoric philosophers, and eloquent politicians deficient economists. Ayn Rand would not deny this reality, but connects productivity and rationality so intimately that they appear mutually inclusive. Thus for less careful observers, expertise becomes intellectually inclusive, thereby fitting its possessor with mystique.

Ron Paul as ‘Doctor’: History, Economics, and Libertarian Rhetoric

Observers regularly describe Ron Paul as the intellectual candidate. British historian Tim Stanley notes his ‘rapid-fire straight-talking, which detoured into scholarly pot-shots at

⁵⁹ Hugh Akston in *Atlas Shrugged* continues to identify the ‘source of work’ as ‘man’s reasoning mind.’

⁶⁰ Rand, *For the New Intellectual*, 7.

⁶¹ Rand, *For the New Intellectual*, 4.

⁶² The *Atlas Shrugged* character Calvin Atwood, for example, illustrates this by abandoning his looted New York power company to become a successful cobbler in John Galt’s individualist haven. As Hugh Akston demanded, ‘What is wrong with a philosopher running a roadside diner? Or a cigarette factory, as I am doing now?’

the American-Philippine War of 1899 and John Maynard Keynes.⁶³ Publisher Robin Koerner acclaims Paul's reliability and wisdom: '...if one were to score American politicians on a) integrity, b) philosophical understanding of humanity and governance, and c) understanding of economics by looking at their speeches, votes, books and predictions, Paul would be among America's Very Best.'⁶⁴

Paul considers fiscal policy the primary means by which government either protects or sabotages the personal freedom of its citizens; hence, some of his most emphatic positions are economic. He argues that 'sound money is equivalent and is necessary to have a free society.'⁶⁵

But nowhere is Paul's intellectual mystique more concise and poignant than in references to his medical credential. His titled full name, Dr. Ron Earnest Paul,⁶⁶ depicts for many supporters an idealized honest intellectual hero. Doctors' personas generate mystique through several means, such as their understanding and use of cryptic language, their extensive education with rigorous training, and their unique prognostic skills together with the trust patients must place in their forecasts.

By denoting his professional history as a medical doctor, Paul's title elicits for his supporters imagery of a benevolent physician, not merely for the health of individuals, but for America, through his restoration of its true fundamental value, liberty. One viral cartoon portrays Paul in scrubs coddling a newborn swaddled in an American flag, presumably representing our delicate and distressed economy.

⁶³ Tim Stanley, 'Why the American media hate and fear Ron Paul,' in *The Telegraph Blogs*, Aug. 17, 2011. Available at <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/timstanley/100101240/why-the-american-media-hate-and-fear-ron-paul> (accessed Sept. 23, 2012).

⁶⁴ Koerner, 'Ron Paul and the Love Revolution of 2012.'

⁶⁵ Ron Paul, 'The Great Enabler: The Rise of the Federal Reserve and the Growth of Government.' Lecture sponsored by Ron and Rand Paul. 26:34 – 39. This talk was uploaded by user CongressmanRonPaul on Sept. 4, 2012, and is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehh77k0rgPs> (accessed Sept. 16, 2012).

⁶⁶ One example of this full reference may be found through *Daily Paul* user pkristopher on August 21, 2012 in his post 'August 20 is Dr. Ron Paul's Birthday!' available at <http://www.dailypaul.com/comment/2679111> (accessed September 22, 2012).

The diagnosis-prognosis methodology, and the epistemic medical mystique associated with it, fit Paul's perceived mastery of economics. While Ron Paul's expertise in articulating the libertarian position is evident, his expertise in economics, as credited to him among his supporters, is fictional. In his literature, Paul exhibits relatively superficial interaction with alternative economic theories, of which he seems only to have learned through the Austrian and libertarian lenses of Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich A. Hayek, and Robert Nozick. Their neoliberal school endorses a maximally free economy that lets the market determine values, prices, interest rates, and the fates of businesses.

Although such expertise is expected of no typical politician, Paul gives the image and encourages the reputation of his own expertise.⁶⁷ Yet this 'amateur intellectual'⁶⁸ lacks a formal background in economics, through which he would have performed statistical modeling and analysis, and certainly would have encountered many more theoretical perspectives on their own terms rather than as coarsely described through the laissez-faire lens of the Austrian school to which he is so deeply wed. With scholastic expertise, he might now entertain more nuanced and sophisticated economic positions.

Instead, Paul uncritically adopts many positions developed by laissez-faire theorists. Paul urges that removing the minimum wage will help the lower class by increasing employment, even though this is precisely the avenue for the exploitation part-time employees⁶⁹ and, in more extreme cases, sweatshop workers. Paul also blames the Federal Reserve for many fundamental economic challenges. He refers to the Fed as 'the great enabler,'⁷⁰ since it provides a monetary safety cushion that encourages and protects businesses who take irresponsible and dangerous financial risks. It also provides the resources for governmental inflation through various forms of economic manipulation, such as determining interest rates and altering the value of the federal currency, especially since the dollar was taken off the gold standard in 1971. The assumption that Paul's informal knowledge of economics implies his mastery of economics, and thus his competence to assess Keynesian and Austrian fiscal policies, contribute to his mystique.

⁶⁷ See for example Chapter 3, 'My intellectual influences,' in *End the Fed*, 32-62.

⁶⁸ Doherty, *Ron Paul's rEVOLution*, 20.

⁶⁹ Walmart's employment practices are a popular example.

⁷⁰ Paul, 'The Great Enabler.'

Yet through the broader insight of multiple schools of economics, some of Paul's claims about the Fed seem overstated, reflecting in another way the inflation of knowledge in Paul's polemics. Paul believes, for example, that ending the Fed will 'bring an end to dollar depreciation,' halt funding for 'endless wars,' 'curb the government's attacks on the civil liberties of Americans,' and 'stop its vast debt accumulation.'⁷¹ Paul claims with blithe simplicity that the timeless economic problems that preceded the Fed will disappear when the institution is eliminated. To accept these arguments requires not a formal knowledge of economics, but the impression of Paul's expertise in economics, fueled by his intellectual mystique as cultivated through such knowledge inflation.⁷²

Paul's amateur knowledge is sufficient to inspire mystique, inasmuch as followers project expertise onto that knowledge. The gap between Ron Paul's actual knowledge, as adjudicated by the limited scope reflected in his books and speeches, and the generous imputation of expansive jurisprudential, historical, and economic knowledge on Ron Paul by his followers, prompts further inquiry into the degree to which mystique participates in Paul's campaign and movement.

Funneling: Simple Solutions and the Genius of Reduction

Because knowledge inflation relies on the nescience or inexperience of supporters, the leader need not provide a comprehensive explanation of the necessary links between one idea and another. Followers' trust and enthusiasm facilitate a second technique of mystique, which may be called 'funneling,' whereby a leader directs multiple ostensibly independent themes through a unifying principle. This requires sufficient creativity to associate and connect, often causally, problems and solutions to the primary narrative. Funneling gives both leader and follower a lucid, central, common focus. In the words of *Atlas Shrugged* character Midas Mulligan, 'It's strange how simple things become, once you see them clearly.'⁷³ Indeed, the Atlas Society claims that Rand 'single-handedly solved an ancient

⁷¹ Paul, *End the Fed*, 6-7.

⁷² It is important to note here that Paul may very well be correct in his assessment, as lack of expertise and mediocre or superficial argumentation do not necessarily lead to false conclusions.

⁷³ Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, 681.

philosophical puzzle.⁷⁴ The persuasive power of funneling resembles a trump or a shibboleth, as funneling is both rhetorically and socially effective. For both Rand and Paul, that central principle is individual freedom.

Rand adopted the Aristotelian view of the human as a rational, moral agent; she argued that because every individual mind has access to objective logic, the individual alone is responsible for living in a rationally consistent manner.⁷⁵ One's own life is his 'standard of value,' and therefore 'his highest moral purpose is the achievement of his own happiness.'⁷⁶ Rand thereby funnels all moral questions through her individualist rubric.

The core commitment of Ayn Rand's individualist philosophy comes through John Galt's oath in *Atlas Shrugged*: 'I swear by my life, and my love of it, that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine.'⁷⁷ It is the pledge by which strikers are permitted to reside and participate in Galt's hidden capitalist free-market utopia. The episode in which Dagny Taggart prudently makes this statement reads almost like a religious conversion, and her utterance opens the 'sound lock' that monitors access to the storage of Galt's genius invention, the pinnacle of his mind's achievements. This imagery gives the oath additional figurative meaning as a personal commitment that liberates oneself from the tyranny of others and unshackles one's potential.⁷⁸

Rand, insulated from the public demands of campaigns and elections, 'reversed the typical understanding of exploitation,'⁷⁹ arguing that 'collectivism was based on exploitation of the more productive,'⁸⁰ aiming to foster laborers' parasitic mooching of their intellectual employers:

⁷⁴ See http://www.atlassociety.org/ayn_rand (accessed Sept. 24, 2012).

⁷⁵ In a well-known 1959 interview with Mike Wallace, Rand explained that 'Each man must live as an end in himself, and follow his own rational self-interest.'

⁷⁶ From the 1959 Mike Wallace interview.

⁷⁷ *Atlas Shrugged*, 979 et al. Versions of this conviction appear in *Anthem* and in *The Fountainhead*.

⁷⁸ An interviewee described some fan letters to Rand as 'incredibly intense: [the novels] changed my life, I feel like you were speaking directly to me, I've never felt free before and now I feel free, ... people kept saying they felt light, they would feel lighter when they read the book, they would feel a feeling of weightlessness, or also 'I feel like I'm awake for the first time.'

⁷⁹ Burns, *Goddess of the Market*, 173.

⁸⁰ Burns, *Goddess of the Market*, 113.

The man at the bottom who, left to himself, would starve in his hopeless ineptitude, contributes nothing to those above him, but receives the bonus of all of their brains. Such is the nature of the ‘competition’ between the strong and the weak of the intellect. Such is the pattern of ‘exploitation’ for which you have damned the strong.⁸¹

It is difficult to read this construct without noting its justification for the exorbitant advantage and opportunity of the intelligent to perpetually subjugate the underprivileged or disadvantaged. Burns explains that because Ayn Rand inspired a moral movement by stirring the imagination as ‘a bestselling novelist rather than a dry theorist,’ she could easily ignore ‘specific questions about how her policy proposals ... would work.’⁸² Whittaker Chambers, the former Soviet national who famously abandoned the communism of his socialist state employer, wrote in his well known tirade against *Atlas Shrugged* that Rand’s industrial-economic model favors an ‘aristocracy of talents,’ problematic for similar reasons as those leading up to the French Revolution.⁸³

Whereas Rand took upon herself no public service responsibilities, Ron Paul’s political occupation requires him to articulate positive economic and social outcomes of his core value. Paul, too, channels all subsidiary issues, whether economic, legal, or social, through one concept—in his case, the lens is ‘personal liberty,’ his ultimate priority. For him, ‘the goal of all political action [should be] the preservation of liberty.’⁸⁴ ‘Above all, the theme

⁸¹ Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, 988-989. Her inversion of exploiter and exploited through Galt’s speech strikingly resembles Nietzschean will to power.

⁸² Jennifer Burns, ‘Ayn Rand’s Long Journey to the Heart of American Politics,’ in *The New Republic*, Aug. 14, 2012. Available online at <http://www.tnr.com/blog/plank/106176/ayn-rands-long-journey-1960s-cult-leader-the-gops-leading-philosopher> (accessed Sept. 24, 2012).

⁸³ Whittaker Chambers, ‘Big Sister is Watching You,’ in *National Review*, Dec. 28, 1957; available on the web at <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/222482/big-sister-watching-you/flashback>. Tellingly, Chambers wrote that while differing at the top in avowed purposed, and possibly in conflict there, at bottom [Right and Left] are much the same thing. The embarrassing similarities between Hitler’s National Socialism and Stalin’s brand of Communism are familiar for the world, as seen in materialist view from the Left. The question becomes chiefly: who is to run that world in whose interests, or perhaps, at best, who can run it more efficiently? Leonard Peikoff sent a response to the *National Review* dated simultaneously with Chambers’ review, but his letter never appeared in the *Review*. It was finally published in 2009 in *Essays on Ayn Rand’s Atlas Shrugged* (Robert Mayhew, ed), 145-47.

⁸⁴ Ron Paul, Speech at the Campaign for Liberty Rally in Orlando, Florida, August 7, 2009, 3:21-24 on the clip uploaded by user BigGalloofToBoot entitled ‘RonPaulOne,’ available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YCNDTzM8hg> (accessed September 23, 2012). In *Liberty Defined*, Paul connected his understanding of liberty to that of ‘Thomas Jefferson and his generation’ (xi-xii).

is liberty. The goal is liberty. The results of liberty are all the things we love, none of which can be finally provided by government.⁸⁵

Many of Paul's supporters attribute to him intellectual mystique for similar reasons that mystique is perceived about Albert Einstein; they both present simple, elegant solutions to a salmagundi of complex problems, bringing accolade and esteem to the man from whom it originated, who thus radiates an intellectual mystique in his admirers' eyes. Einstein derived how the speed of light unites two otherwise independent components of nature (matter and energy), and Ron Paul articulates how liberty unites two normally disjointed fields by serving both as an ethical principle and an economic solution.

Paul linked every economic challenge to some violation of personal liberty, so that the solution, every time, is the contraction of government and expansion of self-determination. He wanted to endorse Rand's level of personal liberty, but with a desire to serve the public, arguing that it will benefit the country by inducing greater prosperity for a greater number of citizens. 'Sound money is connected to free markets and the freedom message and the Constitution, and we can bring this all together for people.'⁸⁶ Liberty was thus Paul's panacea for the nation's financial turmoil, such that whatever magnifies personal autonomy benefits everyone collectively.

Much of Paul's rhetorical strength came from this consistent, simple reduction of all issues to such matters of personal liberty. He often upstaged, and perhaps blindsided, politicians who frequently discuss fiscal policy but rarely economic theory. His opponents' platforms attempt to accommodate the complex and often paradoxical challenges that emerge from attempts to balance conflicting pressure points. By simplifying all of the nation's social and economic problems, Paul could more easily control the political narrative and attract supporters who seek a facile solution to the nation's problems.

⁸⁵ Paul, *Liberty Defined*, xvii. In his June 20, 2012 appearance on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, Paul explained 'I'm always campaigning. I have been campaigning for thirty-four years for my favorite subject and that is personal liberty – that is my goal.'

⁸⁶ From a Ron Paul speech quoted in Altman, 'The Prophet.'

But it is precisely this talent of suppositional imagination—admired by his mystified supporters—that blurs the distinction between fact and fiction. Paul’s libertarian claim that maximal personal liberty and minimal government oversight resolves all fiscal problems remains tenuous, for reasons described above. His followers thereby either dismiss or ignore well-known defects of laissez-faire economics, such as advantages for people who enter the market with inherited privilege and resources (and thus disadvantage for those who do not), or the fortification of such pre-existing disparities into a systematic and persistent imbalance in the effort required for an individual to pursue wealth. Paul wishes to allow everybody to freely acquire capital, but his followers neglect that once resources are earned, they can be used to encumber new competitors, who will (*ceteris paribus*) experience greater difficulty than the first, thereby freely exercising one’s liberty to the suppression of another’s, even if accidental or indirect. The deregulation proposed by Paul’s revolution forfeits the government’s ability to prevent or control exploitation, nepotism, price gouging, hegemonic monopolies, and numerous other blights of laissez-faire capitalism.⁸⁷

His reduction of all problems to matters of liberty also contributes to his license to anticipate the future. He coupled the singular solution of personal liberty with a prediction of the consequences of its absence, for example in his lecture entitled “The Great Enabler”: ‘If we always have a freedom option, time and effort would work our way out of this. Historically, though, most of the time it ends badly, and I’m afraid that we’re moving in that direction.’⁸⁸

Prediction and Fulfillment

‘If you understand the dominant philosophy of a society, you can predict its course.’⁸⁹ This key maxim of Rand’s Objectivism reflects the foresight with which she formulated the plot of *Atlas Shrugged*. Many devotees of Ayn Rand hail her fourth novel as a prescient masterpiece. It forecasts the expansion of governmental control—not only of business but also of individuals—under the pretext of welfare and equality, with some form

⁸⁷ In the introduction of *Liberty Defined*, Paul suggested that even if he could be persuaded that the maximization of personal liberty does not foster the healthiest economy, he would still prefer individual liberty over collective prosperity. See for example p. xii.

⁸⁸ Paul, ‘The Great Enabler,’ 24:33 – 48.

⁸⁹ Ayn Rand, ‘Is Atlas Shrugging?’ in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (Signet, 1986), 165.

of collectivism (which her *Fountainhead* character Toohey calls ‘one neck ready for one leash’) as its philosophical justification; *Atlas Shrugged* ‘provides a link between philosophical concepts and the technical and practical aspects of business.’⁹⁰

Rand anticipated that government could and would be used by the unproductive ‘looters’ and ‘moochers’ to extract resources from the fruits of the productive. Many decisions at the top levels are made by insiders and cronies in order to benefit themselves while placating the public with handouts. The more extensive this process, the more strained a nation’s economic integrity becomes. With the expansion of governmental programs, the addition of offices, and the concomitant demand for funding to pay for them, government regulation, taxation, and in some cases seizure of land and capital often ensue. They appear to Rand devotees as though the plot of *Atlas Shrugged* is being disclosed in reality;⁹¹ it is like ‘replaying *Atlas Shrugged* as you’re reading the newspaper.’⁹² Ayn Rand Institute president Yaron Brook perceives, ‘The novel is so predictive of what’s going on today: regulation breeds regulation, controls breed controls, government will grow, freedom will shrink—and that has all come true.’⁹³

Followers find it ‘astounding’ that she ‘understood way ahead of her time what it was going to lead to;’⁹⁴ every sign of ‘moral decay, intellectual decay, economic decay’⁹⁵ visible today was foreseen by the keenly perceptive novelist. Direct parallels are even visible between specific characters and contemporary businessmen, politicians, economists, and other moguls.

⁹⁰ Edward Younkins, ‘Rand’s Philosophical and Literary Masterpiece,’ in *Ayn Rand’s Atlas Shrugged: A Philosophical and Literary Companion*, ed. Edward Younkins (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 9-22, 14.

⁹¹ Andrew Martin, ‘Give BB&T Liberty, but Not a Bailout,’ *The New York Times*, August 1, 2009. URL <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/business/02bbt.html> (accessed September 16, 2012).

⁹² James M. Kilts in *Ayn Rand and the Prophecy of Atlas Shrugged*, Mortensen, Chris, Gary Anthony Williams, Nick Jameson, and Raija Baroudi (New York: Virgil Films, 2012). Kilts is the former CEO of Gillette, Kraft, and Nabisco.

⁹³ Yaron Brook in *Ayn Rand and the Prophecy of Atlas Shrugged*.

⁹⁴ Ed Snider in *Ayn Rand and the Prophecy of Atlas Shrugged*. Snider owns the Philadelphia Flyers.

⁹⁵ Michael S. Berliner in *Ayn Rand and the Prophecy of Atlas Shrugged*. Berliner is the senior advisor for the Ayn Rand Archives at the Ayn Rand Center for Individual Rights.

Donald Luskin and Andrew Greta align pundits, businessmen, and politicians with characters in Ayn Rand's novels in *I Am John Galt* (2011). Paul Krugman's influential tax-and-spend advocacy, for example, earned him the role of Rand's 'mad collectivist' Ellsworth Toohey, the architect from *The Fountainhead* who promulgates leftist economics in the 'New York Banner.'⁹⁶ Luskin highlights Krugman's hypocritical participation in paid big-business advisory coupled with criticism of "crony-capitalism," without mentioning that [Krugman] himself was one of the cronies.⁹⁷ The John Galt character even describes the futility of printing money and the perniciousness of hyperinflation: "The wads of worthless paper money were growing heavier in the pockets of the nation, but there was less and less for that money to buy. ... The printing presses of the government treasury were running a race with starvation, and losing."⁹⁸

This rhetoric resembles much of the libertarian critique of fiat currency. That the dollar was taken off the gold standard within a generation of *Atlas Shrugged's* publication makes Rand's intellectual stature all the more alluring for current and prospective Objectivists.

Predictions by Paul and Other Libertarians

Ron Paul and his supporters make multiple claims to have predicted America's economic downturn: "People ... don't like to see the rich bailed out, the middle class shrunk, and the poor losing their houses ... and the Austrian free market school of economics explains it. We predicted it would happen, and believe me, the people are waking up to that fact."⁹⁹

CNN commentator Jack Cafferty compared Paul's 2008 warnings about 'the economy imploding' to their fulfillment in the current state of affairs in 2011.¹⁰⁰ Peter Schiff,

⁹⁶ Donald L. Luskin and Andrew Greta, *I Am John Galt: Today's Heroic Innovators Building the World and the Villainous Parasites Destroying It* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011). Luskin is the Chief Investment Officer of the consulting firm Trend Macrolytics.

⁹⁷ Luskin and Greta, *I Am John Galt*, 56.

⁹⁸ *Atlas Shrugged*, 990-91.

⁹⁹ This interview took place on CNN's *Piers Morgan Tonight* on August 15, 2011 (5:48 – 6:01).

¹⁰⁰ Jack Cafferty, 'The Cafferty File' on CNN's *The Situation Room*, August 16, 2011: "When Ron Paul ran for the Republican nomination in 2008, he talked about the economy imploding, the untenable nature of the national

CEO of Euro Pacific Capital and ardent Ron Paul supporter, is reputed to have predicted the collapse of the mortgage bubble.¹⁰¹ In September 2011, *Time* journalist Alex Altman described America's persistent economic woes as the fulfillment of Paul's somber predictions.¹⁰²

But not only is the Ron Paul Revolution associated with the fulfillment of economic predictions; it also makes projections about the future. Paul's 2012 presidential campaign nearly ran an ad featuring a hypothetical 2030 economics lecture in Beijing, wherein the Asian presenter explains: 'In 2012, a man named Ron Paul ran for President. For over 30 years, Ron Paul tried to stop the collapse of his country, but the media ignored him. Of course, we owned most of their debt, and they never recovered from that mess. Now their money is as good as toilet paper.'

The mystique is reinforced inasmuch as Paul's struggle within a corrupt system resembles several recurring themes in Ayn Rand's narrative. Paul is portrayed as an emblem of virtue within a miasma of corruption; he is 'a man far too good for politics,'¹⁰³ and supporters see the same machinations within the media, the government, and the two major parties as Rand did in the looters.

debt, the eventual destruction of our currency, and the limited role for government. In the four years since then, a lot of the things Ron Paul warned us about have happened. We're deeper in debt – a lot deeper. The dollar is worth quite a bit less. ... the country is more divided maybe than at any time since the Civil War.' Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG0jcNBzfwM> (accessed Sept. 23, 2012).

¹⁰¹ See e.g. Lydia Mashburn, Policy Director for Ron Paul's subcommittee on domestic monetary policy: 'he was one of the few financial analysts to predict the collapse of the housing bubble. Everyone else was like 'housing prices have gone up, they just keep going up, it's never historically dropped!' and he said look it's going to collapse because it's not sustainable because he understood what it was about money that caused these bubbles in the economy, and he knew it was going to collapse. Analysts running the gambit [sic] laughed in his face, and when he was proven correct, we are now left picking up the pieces.' Schiff, Peter. 2011. 'What About Money Causes Economic Crises?' Lecture. Uploaded by CongressmanRonPaul on Dec. 19, 2011, 3:12 – 41. URL http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npJ0CUT8d_Y (accessed September 16, 2012).

¹⁰² Altman, 'The Prophet.'

¹⁰³ Jack Hunter, 'Happy Birthday Dr. Paul!' in *Paulitical Ticker, Ron Paul 2012*, August 20, 2012. <http://www.ronpaul2012.com/2012/08/20/happy-birthday-dr-paul> (cached by Google on Sept. 15, 2012). Hunter was a blogger for the Ron Paul 2012 Presidential Campaign Committee's website. He continued, '...and yet he has quickly become the most important political figure of our time.'

Examples of what Corner calls ‘journalistic revelation’¹⁰⁴ in mainstream media were especially salient during the 2012 election cycle. At the beginning of the primary season, Ron Paul nearly won the August 2011 Iowa straw poll, but his success was largely ignored by media pundits on MSNBC’s *Meet the Press*, CBS’ *Face the Nation*, and Fox News Channel’s *Fox News Sunday* (as Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show* famously compiled from August 14, 2011). CNN anchor Drew Griffin notoriously told his correspondent, ‘if you get video of Sarah Palin, or get a sound bite from her, bring that back to us; you can hold the Ron Paul stuff.’¹⁰⁵ Piers Morgan exclaimed that Paul is ‘the most un-talked-about contender ... I can ever remember.’¹⁰⁶

But more than the media, libertarians’ primary nemesis was the Republican National Committee, as the party nomination was of necessity the campaign’s first goal; the Committee juggernaut resembled for Paul supporters a bureaucratic machine programmed to silence the insolent lone libertarian. Elite members of the RNC were perceived to sabotage Paul’s candidacy, in part through their influence on media to present the party as monolithic; the Republicans ‘tried to blackball him ... even though his poll numbers were higher, and others were included.’¹⁰⁷

When the Paul campaign gained momentum after a surge of new delegations in June and early July, the editor of RonPaul.com posted a revised map to highlight the eleven states Paul had won after revised counts of non-binding pledged delegate preferences in early May. The map was then displayed in a Russia Today broadcast, presented on supporter Alexander Higgins’ blog as ‘the real GOP delegate map the media won’t show you,’ and distributed throughout the libertarian blogosphere.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Corner, ‘Mediated Persona and Political Culture,’ 77.

¹⁰⁵ Drew Griffin on ‘CNN Live,’ *CNN Politics*, August 12, 2011.

¹⁰⁶ From the August 15, 2011 discussion on CNN’s *Piers Morgan Tonight*. Morgan interviewed Paul more extensively months later on February 3, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ William Lewis, *The Ron Paul Uprising* (William Lewis Films, 2012), 2:54-3:07.

¹⁰⁸ Supporters also lodged complaints about the layout of the ballot in the Nebraska convention, where delegate candidates supporting Romney’s agenda were clearly designated as such, while other candidates, including Paul supporters, were not; see Daily Paul contributor Rexorooter; see <http://www.dailypaul.com/244696/nebraska-convention-delegates-biggest-concern> (published July 14, 2012; accessed July 19, 2012).

The internal conflict climaxed at the Republican National Convention in Tampa. MSNBC commentator Rachel Maddow assessed that the Committee ‘improperly helped Mitt Romney in his fight to win the nomination,’ and questioned whether Republicans would be free to vote their conscience. At the RNC, Paul delegates and supporters dutifully declared their votes to nominate Paul, only to hear neither acknowledgement of their endorsement nor even any mention of Ron Paul from the RNC chairman, who vocalized only Romney’s delegate votes for each state. Audible within the libertarians’ immediate tumult was the realization and frustration that the RNC actualized so many suspicions and expectations. The Republican leadership’s brazen neglect of the Ron Paul delegation at the national convention could easily serve as an illustration of ‘the lifeless patterning of the propaganda state’¹⁰⁹ portrayed by Ayn Rand.

Yet, like the strikers who sought freedom and refuge in Galt’s Gulch, there remains a resistance for participants in the Ron Paul Revolution. Paul supporters often rely on minor, fringe, and even rogue media sources. The motto of the archive site Ron Paul Flix is ‘Defeating the Media Blackout Since 2007.’¹¹⁰ The Fox affiliate in Cincinnati features a segment called *Reality Check*, led by libertarian journalist Ben Swann. (Some supporters lionize Swann as a hero for highlighting the success of Ron Paul’s campaign and for his aggressive exposés of mainstream political figures,¹¹¹ and propose him as ‘future press secretary’ under president Paul.)¹¹² The *Russia Today* news channel regularly reported (in English) problems within the American political process that fueled Ron Paul supporters’ suspicions of corruption, fraud, and other conspiracy.¹¹³ However, Paul supporters maintain

¹⁰⁹ John Nichols, ‘His Supporters Treated ‘Atrociously,’ Ron Paul Refuses to Back Romney,’ in *The Nation*, Aug. 29, 2012. Available online at <http://www.thenation.com/blog/169618/his-supporters-treated-atrociously-ron-paul-refuses-back-romney> (accessed Sept. 24, 2012). Nichols relates the RNC fiasco to the malfeasance of hegemonic institutions in Ayn Rand and George Orwell novels.

¹¹⁰ See ronpaulflix.com (last accessed Nov. 30, 2012).

¹¹¹ Daily Paul forum, <http://www.dailypaul.com/235372/have-you-read-ben-swanns-bio> (accessed July 17, 2012).

¹¹² See e.g. YouTube user Girls4RonPaul in the video entitled ‘This is why Ron Paul will WIN GOP Nomination!’ at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14QbJ5S3kcc> (uploaded February 11, 2012; accessed July 16, 2012).

¹¹³ Some recognize the awkwardness in obtaining news from an agency linked to the Kremlin with socialist inclinations; see for example opinions on the Daily Paul forum at <http://www.dailypaul.com/102965/my-problem-with-rt-news-channel> (accessed July 17, 2012).

hope; ‘The message is out and the Revolution has changed politics.’¹¹⁴ During the previous election cycle, *Reason* magazine contributor Cathy Young had called libertarians’ losing streak ‘A love revolution, Goldwater-style.’¹¹⁵

Ron Paul recommends the consideration of Carroll Quigley’s attribution of some political developments and reform to clandestine influence,¹¹⁶ in some of which Quigley claims to have had a role.¹¹⁷ He endorses Quigley’s thesis that ‘there is tragedy if you don’t accept this, and there is hope if you know who runs the show.’¹¹⁸ Some express disappointment that ‘given the media’s near-blackout, we may never know’¹¹⁹ whether Ron Paul could have rallied more support than his GOP opponents, or the effects of a Ron Paul presidency on the economy, foreign policy, and every other political matter. Similar to the unknown real value of goods and commodities due to price fixing and currency manipulation, we cannot know Paul’s real influence with fair media treatment. The revolution that could have been is a permanent mystery supplementing the mystique of Ron Paul phenomenon.

Conclusion

We have seen how intellectual mystique is generated through roughly three means: the appearance of possessing great knowledge, the concentration of ideas into a singular unifying principle, and the reciprocity of prediction and fulfillment. In all three cases, admiration is enhanced through intellectual constructs, the fully rational details of which elude supporters. Rand’s literature provides much of the narrative background for Paul’s

¹¹⁴ See e.g. YouTube user RonPaulFourLiberty’s video ‘How Ron Paul Will Win the Election Even if He Isn’t the GOP Nominee’ (uploaded March 16, 2012; accessed July 19, 2012).

¹¹⁵ Cathy Young, ‘A love revolution, Goldwater-style,’ in *The Boston Globe*, Sept. 1, 2007. Available online at http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2007/09/01/a_love_revolution_goldw_ater_style (accessed Sept. 23, 2012).

¹¹⁶ In reference to Carroll Quigley as one of Bill Clinton’s stated intellectual mentors. See William J. Clinton, ‘Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in New York,’ July 16, 1992. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25958>. Accessed September 16, 2012.

¹¹⁷ See e.g. Paul’s response, wherein he mentions Quigley and his opus *Tragedy and Hope*.

¹¹⁸ Speech edited and uploaded on Jan. 3, 2009 by YouTube user bellyoffire, entitled ‘Ron Paul – Why Alex Jones Can Work for the Elite and Expose them,’ URL <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GY5TUfKHKtI>, accessed Sept. 16, 2012.

¹¹⁹ Kara Miller, ‘Ron Paul Strikes Back,’ in *Culture Club*, *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 16, 2011. Available online at http://boston.com/community/blogs/culture_club/2011/08/ron_paul_strikes_back.html (accessed Sept. 23, 2012).

revolution, and her heroes exhibit knowledge inflation, funneling and prediction-fulfillment in a philosophical and theoretical manner. Paul, on the other hand, lives out those constructs in the political reality of his revolution. With the intellectual mystique he obtains through symmetry with Randian archetypes, Ron Paul embodies those paradigmatic heroes, thereby translating fiction into fact.

The author wishes to thank this article's reviewers and David Waldenmaier for their valuable insight on and criticism of his work.