

tions—and, secondarily, proceeding from persons, in terms of history, society and the world.

The theme requires: to show who are the prime movers and why, how they function. Who are their enemies and why, what are the motives behind the hatred for and the enslavement of the prime movers; the nature of the obstacles placed in their way, and the reasons for it.

This last paragraph is contained entirely in *The Fountainhead*. Roark and Toohey are the complete statement of it. Therefore, this is not the direct theme of *The Strike*—but it is part of the theme and must be kept in mind, stated again (though briefly) to have the theme clear and complete.

First question to decide is on whom the emphasis must be placed—on the prime movers, the parasites or the world. The answer is: *The world*. The story must be primarily a picture of the whole.

In this sense, *The Strike* is to be much more a "social" novel than *The Fountainhead*. *The Fountainhead* was about "individualism and collectivism within man's soul"; it showed the nature and function of the creator and the second-hander. The primary concern there was with Roark and Toohey—showing what they are. The rest of the characters were variations of the theme of the relation of the ego to others—mixtures of the two extremes, the two poles: Roark and Toohey. The primary concern of the story was the characters, the people as such—their natures. Their relations to each other—which is society, men in relation to men—were secondary, an unavoidable, direct consequence of Roark set against Toohey. But it was not the theme.

Now, it is this relation that must be the theme. Therefore, the personal becomes secondary. That is, the personal is necessary only to the extent needed to make the relationships clear. In *The Fountainhead* I showed that Roark moves the world—that the Keatings feed upon him and hate him for it, while the Tooheys are out consciously to destroy him. But the theme was Roark—not Roark's relation to the world. Now it will be the relation.

In other words, I must show in what concrete, specific way the world is moved by the creators. Exactly how do the second-handers live on the creators. Both in spiritual matters—and (most particularly) in concrete, physical events. (Concentrate on the concrete, physical events—but don't forget to keep in mind at all times how the physical proceeds from the spiritual.) . . .

However, for the purpose of this story, I do not start by showing how the second-handers live on the prime movers in actual, everyday reality—nor do I start by showing a normal world. (That comes in only in necessary retrospect, or flashback, or by implication in the events themselves.) I start with the fantastic premise of the prime movers going on strike. This is the actual heart and center of the novel. A distinction care-

fully to be observed here: I do not set out to glorify the prime mover (*that was The Fountainhead*). I set out to show how desperately the world needs prime movers, and how viciously it treats them. And I show it on a hypothetical case—what happens to the world without them.

In *The Fountainhead* I did not show how desperately the world needed Roark—except by implication. I did show how viciously the world treated him, and why. I showed mainly what he is. It was Roark's story. This must be the world's story—in relation to its prime movers. (Almost—the story of a body in relation to its heart—a body dying of anemia.)

I don't show directly what the prime movers do—that's shown only by implication. I show what happens when they don't do it. (Through that, you see the picture of what they do, their place and their role.) (This is an important guide for the construction of the story.)

In order to work out the story, Ayn Rand had to understand fully why the prime movers allowed the second-handers to live on them—why the creators had not gone on strike throughout history—what errors even the best of them made that kept them in thrall to the worst. Part of the answer is dramatized in the character of Dagny Taggart, the railroad heiress who declares war on the strikers. Here is a note on her psychology, dated April 18, 1946:

Her error—and the cause of her refusal to join the strike—is over-optimism and over-confidence (particularly this last).

Over-optimism—in that she thinks men are better than they are, she doesn't really understand them and is generous about it.

Over-confidence—in that she thinks she can do more than an individual actually can. She thinks she can run a railroad (or the world) single-handed, she can make people do what she wants or needs, what is right, by the sheer force of her own talent; not by forcing them, of course, not by enslaving them and giving orders—but by the sheer over-abundance of her own energy; she will show them how, she can teach them and persuade them, she is so able that they'll catch it from her. (This is still faith in their rationality, in the omnipotence of reason. The mistake? Reason is not automatic. Those who deny it cannot be conquered by it. Do not count on them. Leave them alone.)

On these two points, Dagny is committing an important (but excusable and understandable) error in thinking, the kind of error individualists and creators often make. It is an error proceeding from the best in their nature and from a proper principle, but this principle is misapplied. . . .

The error is this: it is proper for a creator to be optimistic, in the deepest, most basic sense, since the creator believes in a benevolent universe and functions on that premise. But it is an error to extend that optimism to other specific men. First,