

Equality and Universality of Individual Rights

Part One of this paper refuted the origin and proof of Thomas Jefferson's claim in the Declaration of Independence that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It defined a right as unnatural, opposed to nature, representing the circumstances where a society can — indeed must — justly interfere with force to restrain the strong and the many, to protect the weak and the few. And it demonstrated that the rights we enjoy and defend are not inalienable, but only represent the vast store of accumulated physical and social capital of Western Civilization.

Part Two will refute Jefferson's claim that rights are universal and apply equally to all men. The evidence I present for the case against the universality and equality of Jeffersonian Rights — and discuss the unsettling practical and philosophical consequences — is illustrated by three 20th century novels, none of which could have been conceived, written, or understood prior to the Industrial Revolution. In contrast, I also present as evidence, a fourth 20th century novel that could have been written a thousand years ago.

These novels reject Jefferson's contention that "*all* men are created equal ..." and argue to their readers that some are better than others, and that a person's rights and status should be commensurate with his talents, his principles and his vision. These stories were written, and are worth reading, because the protagonists are superior, and that the number and scope of their rights are greater than the common man. And that the rest of society should recognize this and treat them accordingly.

The first of the three novels I present as evidence is *The Fountainhead*, by Ayn Rand. Set in the 1920s, and published in 1943, it chronicles the struggles of a young genius, Howard Roarke, who challenges the status quo of the architectural profession, much in the same way as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates would challenge the mainframe computer industry half a century later. But unlike Jobs and Gates, his ideas are suppressed and his achievements are destroyed by the stagnant and calcified society he was born into.

The second novel is *The Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison. Set in the 1930s and published in 1947, it is a first person narrative also chronicling the thoughts and actions of a young genius, who joins the Communist Party underground. His dramatic rise within the party, due to his leadership and speaking abilities, is matched by his abrupt fall and expulsion, due to his stubborn refusal to compromise his principles. Regardless of where he goes or what he does, his ambition is crushed, his achievements are destroyed, and his individual dignity is denied him. The author fails to provide his main character a name to emphasize the tragedy of a black man's inability to gain otherwise commonplace acceptance and recognition, both in the segregated rural culture of the South, and the cosmopolitan urban culture of New York City.

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The third novel is *The Teardrop Story Woman*, by Catherine Lim. Set in the 1940s and 50s, and published in 1998, it tells the tragic story of a Chinese girl, Mei Kwei, born into a backwards superstitious rural society — that prizes boys and shuns girls — in the foreign land of Malaysia. She is chained to a reluctant father — an abusive, derelict opium addict — dominated by a wayward whore-mongering Big Older Brother, and receives no support from her meek and helplessly submissive mother. Her dreams and aspirations of an education, achievement, and marriage to the man she loves — a French Roman Catholic Priest — are cruelly denied her. Both because of who she is, and because of what her success and happiness would represent to the society in which she lives.

On the surface, these three novels could not be more different. A Caucasian male born into a society that initially accepts, encourages and educates him. The grandson of an illiterate slave born into the segregated South, who is destined to a futile struggle, fighting for the basic dignities the rest of society takes for granted. And a Chinese female, born in a foreign country occupied by invading Japanese, then dominated by British colonialists. But they are one in the same. Read one and — with only a change of name, plot and setting, *mutatis mutandis* — you've read them all.

What unites these novels is the reader's identification and empathy with the main characters. They are tragic in the sense that the noblest and highest aspirations that all of us share, are indiscriminately denied to the three heroes who deserve them the most. All three are expelled from school and denied the opportunities offered by a university education, conferred with a formal diploma. They are all outcasts in their communities and are shunned by society.

They all have elderly mentors, who faced similar predicaments, but without any hope of succeeding. Howard Roarke modeled himself after the architect Henry Cameron. The Invisible Man's destiny was foretold by his grandfather, an ex-slave. And Mei Kwei sought guidance and solace from her backwards and superstitious Second Grandmother, who provided her with the promise of achievement and happiness, and whose memory comforted her during the despair that was her inevitable destiny.

All three characters' fates are driven by second rate individuals who inherit the power of status. Peter Keating, the vacuous and servile architect in *The Fountainhead*, regularly takes credit for the work of others. Dr. Blesdoe, the bullying sycophantic college president in *The Invisible Man*, grovels in front of the wealthy white benefactors of his institution. And Austin Tong, the weakling epigone who inherits his father's wealth in *The Teardrop Story Woman*, but who will be unable to nurture it and pass it on to his children.

Had these heroes not chosen to define their individuality and assert their rights, their stories would not have been written. Howard Roarke's prescribed destiny was to spend two decades as

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a toiling apprentice to Guy Francone, hoping to eventually be recognized as a prominent architect. In the segregated South, the Invisible Man's destiny was to spend two decades as an anonymous lackey to Dr. Blesdoe, hoping to eventually succeed him. And Mei Kwei was predestined to be married-off to the highest bidder in a transaction barely indistinguishable from a slave auction.

However all three protagonists reject the opportunities offered to them and naively define their own standards independent of the culture and society they were born into. Howard Roarke has the courage to challenge the status quo of the architectural profession by shedding ancient classical styles and applying the advances of modern technology to create entirely new classes of structures. The Invisible Man refuses to repeat the façade of lies that protect the racially segregated institutions and the people who run them. And Mei Kwei's natural desire for success and happiness propel her to ignore the traditional superstitious prohibitions against the emancipation of women, marriage outside her race, and marriage to a Catholic priest. All three challenge the religions of their civilizations, and contemplate the rejection of religion entirely.

The Invisible Man speaks for all three characters when he states, "I was never more hated than when I tried to be honest. Or when I tried to articulate exactly what I felt to be the truth ... On the other hand, I've never been more loved and appreciated than when I tried to justify and affirm someone's mistaken beliefs; or when I tried to give my friends the incorrect, absurd answers they wished to hear ... My problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own. I have also been called one thing and then another, while no one wished to hear what I called myself. So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others, I finally rebelled.

Of course, these three protagonists should be leaders of their societies: Leaders of the strong who protect the weak. Instead they are held captive and constrained by society's established institutions, which allow the weak to strangle and shackle the strong, like Samson chained to the pillars. But as the Invisible Man, struggling to find his identity states, "Whoever else I was, I was no Samson. I had no desire to destroy myself even if it destroyed the machine; I wanted freedom, not destruction. It was exhausting, for no matter what the scheme I conceived, there was one constant flaw — myself. There was no getting around it. I could no more escape than I could think of my identity. Perhaps, I thought, the two things are involved with each other. When I discover who I am, I'll be free."

The Meritocracy of Individual Rights

While these three novels are written as tragedies, they are not tragedies in the classical sense. A classical tragedy is timeless — meaning that it will be comprehensible, compelling and tragic one thousand years after it was written, as it would be to an audience one thousand years before.

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The heroes of these novels are not primarily concerned with the physical struggle for survival. None of them is hostage to the scarcities of nature. None of them suffers from a physical deformity or crippling illness. None even suffers a tragic fate such as the ravages of war or natural disaster, from which they are unable to recover.

These novels are not even tragic in the American sense of freedom. For none of these characters is a slave or in any way bound against their will. Despite their humble origins, all three have a level of freedom, a standard of living, and a range of opportunities that easily exceeds their parents, and far exceeds the ‘paradise’ the Pilgrims thought they found when they landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620.

In classical tragedies, man succumbs to his fate due to the wrath of nature or for the want of a nail. However, in these novels, it’s not the lack of economic resources, or the random shocks of nature, that defines their tragedy. Instead it’s the abundance of economic resources and personal opportunities available to them.

Each character can have more success and happiness than anyone else they know if they would only agree to play by society’s rules, limit their own potential, and bow down to customs and norms they believe to be inferior. Thus they do not suffer the inevitable fate common to all human beings. Rather they choose to suffer the optional fate offered by the unique possibilities open only to them — as exceptional human beings.

All the characters portrayed in these novels live in the same environment with the same rights. But only the heroes have their rights violated. Only they have stories worth telling. Had these novels been written from the perspective of the second rate characters — who had a first-rate status bestowed on them — they would not have been tragic. Either because they did not envision or aspire to a status or standard beyond what was given them. Or because they implicitly knew they were not capable of attaining it. Each inherited his role in life and was content with his circumstances, but for the presence of the superior protagonists, who threaten to expose them as pretenders, cowards and frauds.

Speaking for Howard Roarke, the self-made press baron Gail Wynand, recalls the frustrations of his youth, “Did you want to scream, when you were a child, seeing nothing but fat ineptitude around you, knowing how many things could be done and done well, but having no power to do them? Having no power to blast the empty skulls around you? Having to take orders — that’s bad enough — but to take orders from your inferiors?”

Echoing these sentiments and lamenting the suffering and ruin of her family brought about by her father’s opium addiction, Mei Kwei’s personal outrage is described in like terms: “The brisk

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decisiveness in her tone could not hide her pain: ‘Mother, how long are you going to let Father and Big Older Brother make a slave of you? Are you going to prison for their debts?’ [Her mother] began to cry, but there was now no stopping the girl’s recklessness. Her voice rang with mocking laughter and her fingers flew with angry energy ...”

In contrast to this indignant outrage, the sycophantic Dr. Blesdoe is blunt and unapologetic when he boasts of his success, while simultaneously reprimanding the Invisible Man, condemning him to a life of servile obscurity when he shouts, “You’re nobody son. You don’t exist — can’t you see that? Shocks you, doesn’t it? Well, that’s the way it is. It’s a nasty deal and I don’t always like myself ... I mean it son. I had to be strong and purposeful to get where I am. I had to wait and plan and lick around ... Yes, I had to act the nigger! I don’t even insist it was worth it, but now I’m here and I mean to stay — after you win the game, you take the prize and you keep it; there’s nothing else to do.”

Bound For Glory On the Road to Expanding Rights

Intrinsic to the plots of these novels are the unlimited possibilities and potential within the grasp of the heroes, which depend upon unnatural technologies — especially the mobility provided by the automobile — that were inconceivable one thousand, or even one hundred years before. For the automobile allows the lowest members of society to travel the equivalent of a week’s journey in only a few hours — transporting them to a new world, a new culture, and new opportunity.

These unnatural technologies have fed man’s unlimited appetite to aspire to greater and higher ideals and demand additional rights. This exponential expansion of rights in our minds is nicely illustrated by the movie, *The Music Man*. While the plot is a simple love story, the context deals with the perceived threats to the foundation of society and the necessity of denying the individual rights of acceptance and tolerance.

Set at the dawn of the twentieth century, a traveling salesman, professor Harold Hill, arrives on a train to a nondescript small town no different than the one he came from. He does not represent a new set of ideas or technologies. He speaks the same language, was born of the same race, worships the same God, and presents no threat to any of the residents. However, because no one knows him, he is followed wherever he goes and is universally regarded with suspicion, bordering on contempt. The townspeople rightly fear him, not so much because no one knows him, but because his access to the new technology of passenger trains increases the likelihood that he will swindle them and escape before he is exposed.

In the town visited by Harold Hill, the embedded traditions of familiarity and loyalty are the bonds to one’s family, institutions and community. They hold a society together and comprise

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the social capital that define and protect individual rights. Yet these same embedded traditions and bonds shackle the protagonists of these novels, and represent barriers to their rights.

In direct contrast, a generation later in the 1930s, New York City gave the Invisible Man opportunities he did not know existed and never thought possible. He described his thoughts and emotions, comparing the rural agrarian south — from which he was transported by bus — to the urban industrialized north, as an emancipation. “In the South everyone knew you, but coming North was a jump into the unknown. How many days could you walk the streets of the big city without encountering anyone who knew you ... You could actually make yourself anew. The notion was frightening, for now the world seemed to flow before my eyes. All boundaries down. Freedom was not only the recognition of necessity, it was the recognition of possibility ... after existing for some twenty years, I did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility.”

Since the beginning of human history, the opportunities of interacting and cooperating with strangers from different tribes were rare. The risks were high. And the rewards were low. The Industrial Revolution and motorized transportation made these rare opportunities routine. The rewards increased dramatically, while the risks were virtually eliminated.

Subtracting only one hundred years, and removing the technology of motorized transportation — which both integrates and transforms communities, cultures and civilizations — the settings and plots of these novels do not exist. This is why these three novels would not be understood by readers prior to the Industrial Revolution. Because these new opportunities have expanded the scope of rights in our minds. And we now take these rights for granted.

How would a 20th century writer communicate to a pre-literate society — where slavery was not only the norm, but the only way of life most people knew — the concept of an emancipation document granting a slave his freedom? When people depended on a Lord or master to survive, what would be the meaning or use of freedom? Freedom to do what? Starve? Freedom to go where? The wilderness? For what purpose? To be a slave to nature, just as they were slaves to a human master?

In addition to the alien concept of freedom, how would Ralph Ellison describe and convey to 15th century readers the joy and exhilaration the Invisible Man experiences in the anonymity of New York City? And how would Catherine Lim instill into the mind of a 15th century reader the moral indignation of a young woman being denied the right to choose the man she marries?

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Individuality, Privacy, Self-Ownership and the Right of Rebellion

In their desperate struggles within and against their collective societies, each character expresses his individuality differently, but each description applies to the other two, and more importantly to the readers who empathize with their predicaments. Howard Roarke says, “I’m selling myself, and I’ll play the game that way — for the time being ... But there are some things I can’t do their way — and this is one of them.”

Speaking of Mary, the kind and gentle Christian woman who provides him with food and shelter (an allusion to the virgin mother Mary), the Invisible Man, complains, “There are many things about people like Mary that I dislike. For one thing, they seldom know where their personalities end and yours begins; they usually think in terms of “we,” while I have always tended to think in terms of “me” — and that has caused some friction, even within my own family ... Everyone seemed to have a plan for me, and beneath that a more secret plan.”

Likewise, Mei Kwei resisted her prescribed fate and sought independence. As her impending marriage to a man she did not love grew nearer, she held out the hope, “I am not married to him yet. He does not own me yet.”

In their modern settings, these thoughts and emotions appear to us to be justified and honorable. However, they did not apply before the industrial age, and were virtually unknown prior to the age of Guttenberg. For an illiterate peasant prior to the age of machines, there was no other way to choose, reject or to sell yourself.

Mei Kwei would have been sold in marriage to the highest bidder, without ever thinking she had the right of self-ownership and the ability to choose her husband. “... her beauty was not hers, but for plundering by others ... It would only be a matter of time before some rich man came to ask for her hand and to pluck her, as well as her family, from poverty and obscurity ... In the ancestral country, emperors sent henchmen to scour the mean streets for such a rare jewel.”

Even if they could have exercised their independence like the legendary Daniel Boone, rejected society and made a successful go of it on their own in the wilderness, their stories would not have been worth telling or reading. Because unlike Daniel Boone, they only have value within an organized society. Daniel Boone was a minor footnote to American history. No one followed his example, and he left no legacy.

Thus these heroes choose the tyranny of society and reject the freedom of isolation. Consequently they are denied the rights of tolerance and acceptance. They desire not freedom, but cooperation ... on their terms. They desire respect for their unique abilities. They desire to

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command and rule. Their superior talents compel them to demand significantly more rights than the common man.

They could use force like schoolyard bullies, but they view it as beneath them. Instead, they are Christ-figures in that they practice and preach the ideal principles for society. Because they refuse to be bullies, and instead seek the consent of the rest of society, the calculus of public choice theory predestines them to failure.

Thus their circumstances and fates are reminiscent of many historical figures who challenged the status quo of society. The selective bias of history celebrates those who succeed, such as Martin Luther and the Founding Fathers, but ignores or denigrates those who fail, such as Robert Owen and John DeLorean.

The bias of history also posthumously celebrates those who fail, but were proven correct, such as Galileo Galilei and General Billy Mitchell. But what the bias of history does not record are those who challenged the established institutions of society, were hopelessly wrong, and were rightfully suppressed or obliterated. Galileo is frequently cited as a martyr for the cause of free speech and tolerance, while Ptolemy is not. Billy Mitchell is cited as a martyr for the cause of advancing the tactics of warfare, while Andre Maginot is not.

To challenge the established order of society is to attempt to vandalize and gamble with the collective sum of social capital that took generations to accumulate. This is a commonly accepted practice in modern day business, but is considered treason in political society. The Invisible Man reluctantly acknowledges this when he states, "Dr. Blesdoe is right, I told myself, he's right; the school and what it stands for has to be protected. There was no other way."

The ongoing question for society is not whether to accept or reject new ideas, but to calculate their potential costs and benefits in advance of testing them. To gamble with the social capital accumulated by prior generations is not a right, but a privilege, which carries with it an obligation. The false security provided by the Maginot Line resulted in the swift defeat of France in the spring of 1940. The number of those in history who challenged the foundation of society and were proven correct is relatively small, compared to the countless charlatans and failures whose names were never recorded.

Classical and Common Man

For the lowly common man, incapable of challenging the established order of society, rights are of no more concern than the daily movements of the stock market. Because he owns no stock, akin to the ability to demand individual rights, he expresses no interest. In Aleksandr

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Solzhenitsyn's classic novel, *One Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich*, the protagonist Ivan Denisovich Shukov — imprisoned for ten years for expressing an opinion — shows scant outrage over his fate, and barely complains. He has little time to contemplate the tragedy of his circumstances and his lost hopes and dreams. His thoughts and concerns are basic and animalistic, in the sense that humans are little more than animals seeking survival and comfort.

Shukov seeks warmth, food, clothes that fit, companionship, and a good night's rest. His status as a prisoner and slave is of secondary interest, perhaps because his guards and captors are forced to endure the same circumstances, with a barely perceptible better standard of living. Surprisingly, his day ends up being productive, even happy. Solzhenitsyn writes, "Shukhov went to sleep fully content. He'd had many strokes of luck that day."

Solzhenitsyn wrote this novel, not as a story expressing indignant outrage over the violation of Shukov's rights, but rather as a story of survival against nature and within Soviet society — in the vein of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*. Since Shukov's fate would be only marginally improved upon release, the violation of his rights — assuming he has any — is a secondary element to the story of his day behind barbed wire. It barely enters his consciousness.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich is, of course, the story of Solzhenitsyn. It is a classical novel because it gives a voice to the suffering and fate of the common man. Not because it complains about the injustice done to him, an exceptional man. Solzhenitsyn could have written it from his perspective, which is the perspective of Howard Roarke, the Invisible Man and Mei Kwei. And that is the difference between a classic and a best seller.

These subjective and hierarchical aspects of individual rights are most poignantly illustrated by the Invisible Man's anger at the illiterate Negro sharecropper Jim Trueblood, who confesses to a wealthy white trustee of his college that he has simultaneously impregnated both his wife and teenage daughter. Trueblood's daughter, like Shukov, accepts her fate almost as if it is natural and typical. As he drives the college trustee away from their visit to Trueblood's farm, the Invisible Man curses him under his breath with the words, "You no-good bastard!"

From the Invisible Man's perspective, Trueblood's incest is not crime against his daughter, but rather a crime against him. Trueblood will not suffer for his crime of incest. Instead, the Invisible Man will be convicted and be forced to serve the sentence. For in the eyes of the ruling white class — represented by the trustee of the college — Trueblood's incest provides *prima facie* evidence of the inherent savage nature of the Negro race. The Invisible Man's future will be forever restricted because he is associated with the uncivilized nature of his racial kin, and thus condemned to a lower social status in the white man's eyes.

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In addition to Trueblood's daughter, the book contains several classical characters in the Shukov mode, such as the Invisible Man's grandfather, a pair of destitute elderly ex-slaves evicted from their apartment, and the expelled Communist party cadre Tod Clifton, who is reduced to the status of a street beggar. All of them are humiliated; their dignity is denied them; and their basic needs are left unmet.

Yet, like Shukov, they barely express outrage over the indignities and hardships that befall them. The outrage and indignation is felt by the Invisible Man. He is the one who seeks to redress these violations of their rights, not those whose rights have been violated. Like Shukov, these helpless characters the Invisible Man so indignantly defends, submissively accept their fate.

Instead of the inspiration of the lofty ideals of Jeffersonian Rights, these lesser characters stoically accept the plebeian version of the classic lessons of Homer and the Old Testament. Like Hector's duty, his wife's tragedy, Troy's necessity, and the baby's cry, they come to understand that:

- You will be disappointed, confused, frustrated and betrayed
- You will be, beaten, tortured, enslaved and humiliated
- You will grow old, feeble, useless and helpless
- You will struggle, suffer, fail and die

At the end of the novel, although the Invisible Man is not yet thirty years old, he begins to understand and accept the classical nature of his destiny. Reflecting on the futile struggle and failure of his search for the individual identity, dignity and rights he thought he deserved, the Invisible Man confesses, "I am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves. I am only ashamed of myself for having at one time been ashamed ... Perhaps that makes me a little bit as human as my grandfather. Once I thought my grandfather incapable of thoughts about humanity, but I was wrong. Why should an old slave use such a phrase as "This and this has made me more human," as I did? Hell, he never had any doubts about his humanity — that was left to his "free" offspring. He accepted his humanity just as he accepted the principle. It was his, and the principle lives on in all its human and absurd diversity."

The Toiling Huddled Masses

The writer Nelson Algren implicitly understood the chasm that separates the elite few like the Invisible Man, from the toiling masses whose rights he was unable to defend. Algren famously said of Chicago, "It's the city of 'I Will,' but what about those to say, 'I Can't'?"

One person who said, "I can't," was a depression era auto worker who, recalling the arbitrarily strict, humiliating and stress-laden routine on the Ford Motor Company assembly line — and the

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physical and mental price he paid — indignantly proclaimed, “You had to give up your manhood, your dignity, your pride.” In a similar vein, commenting on his father’s life, the one-time head of the United Auto Workers Union noted, “The higher up you go on the social scale, the less you can speak your mind.”

Of course, both of these statements are false. For the auto worker, the opposite was true. He did not give up his manhood, his dignity, and his pride to work at Ford. Instead, it was the security of the regular paycheck provided by Ford that gave this man — and countless others like him — his manhood, his dignity and his pride. When Ford was forced to lay off thousands of workers during the depression, they were reduced to the status of helpless beggars like Tod Clifton, forever in search of their next meal — without any conception of their manhood, their dignity or their pride.

Thus the weak masses usually obtain their manhood, dignity and pride — or more precisely, have their manhood, dignity and pride defined for them — by following orders in submissive servitude to an employer, lord or master. While the strong few define and obtain their manhood, dignity and pride by giving orders, and by shaping society.

Prior to World War II, no one working on an assembly line described it as pleasant, or even tolerable. Stories of auto workers refused permission to go to the bathroom — or fired for taking too long in the bathroom — are legend. Yet in 1932, thousands of unemployed Ford workers marched on the River Rouge plant demanding jobs in the depths of the depression, making explicit their ardent desire to serve as slaves under brutal conditions. It was not the masters who were using force to subdue and enslave the masses. But rather it was the masses of slaves, who were using force in an attempt to shackle themselves to their master.

Where the Invisible Man indignantly complained that, “Everyone seemed to have a plan for me, and beneath that some more secret plan,” the Ford workers who marched on the River Rouge turned this upside-down and complained that no one had a plan for them. No one even had a secret plan for them. No one would enslave them, regiment their lives, abuse them, and in the process, take care of them. No one would give them their manhood, their dignity and their pride, which they came to believe were their Inalienable Rights.

It is always and everywhere assumed that a slave has an inalienable right to rebel against his master. But now slaves were demanding a master where none could be found. They were free men who could not bear to endure their freedom. If masters can use force to enslave the masses, can now the masses use force to make their masters enslave them? And if not force, can slaves use the democratic process and majority rule to command their masters to dominate and oppress them? And does this obligate their masters to enslave them when they do not — or cannot — wish to do so?

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This modern day cry of indignity and injustice is a pitiful and vain rejection of freedom and independence, and a desperate plea for one's primitive "rights" as a slave. For the baby-boomer generation, this demand of helpless slaves to fill the void left by their former master has migrated to the middle class, and evolved into a right which has been codified into law. The post-war generation feels no sense of shame as it whines and complains, "They can't fire me! I've been with this company for 27 years. After all I've all given them. After all I've sacrificed. And now they toss me onto the trash heap." Of course, they have not been wronged, and their rights have not been violated. In fact, they have been emancipated. Their employer has uttered to them the most unspeakable and devastating words — which gave birth to Western Civilization thousands of years ago in Egypt — "You're free to go."

Equality and Universality

The heroes of these novels could become the rulers of society under its established set of principles. However, they only desire to rule themselves under their own principles of personal integrity. For the man of exceptional abilities, who deserves more rights than the common man, to compromise his standards, represents selling his soul. Howard Roarke speaks for the Invisible Man and Mei Kwei when he pleads, "To sell your soul is the easiest thing in the world. That's what everyone does every hour of his life. If I asked you to keep your soul — would you understand why that's much harder?"

But the common man, the second-hander with ordinary abilities, has nothing representing a soul to sell, and is little more than a beggar. Roarke observes, "The basic need of the second-hander is to secure his ties with men in order to be fed. He places relations first. He declares that men exist in order to serve others. He preaches altruism. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to swim with the current. But the creator is the man who goes against the current. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to stand together. But the creator is the man who stands alone."

The Invisible Man takes this one step further by noting, "There's always an element of crime in freedom." Which is why the higher one moves up the social scale, the more a man with genuine talent is able to speak his mind. But only for those with the talent to move up the social scale. For the common man, such as an assembly line worker, one can only move up the social scale by luck or by fraud. Thus they are never granted the right to speak their mind.

Howard Roarke bluntly categorizes their motivations. "They have no concern for facts, ideas, work. They're concerned only with people. They don't ask: 'Is this true?' They ask: 'Is this what others think is true?' Not to judge, but to repeat. Not to do, but give the impression of doing. Not creation, but show. Not ability, but friendship. Not merit, but pull." They are

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Nelson Algren's toiling masses who say, "I can't." They do not ask, 'Is this true?' because they are incapable of conceiving or constructing an alternative.

However Roarke's statements are disingenuous because they don't reflect his innate integrity, but instead betray his unique talents. Everyone must seek to secure ties with men in order to be fed. The difference is that men of exceptional ability have many options, many ties, at generous rates of remuneration. They ask, "Is this true?" because they have the capacity to explore and create a new reality. They are bullies, not with their fists, but with their talents and intellect.

The common man is fortunate to have one tie to one employer, often at demeaning terms not of his choosing. Without it, he is reduced to the status of a beggar. Thus the largest segment of the human race prefers slavery to freedom, because slaves do not have to secure ties with other men in order to be fed. In slavery, those ties have been secured for them.

As all three novels illustrate, when their heroes are unable to distinguish themselves from the common man, they must secure ties with men in order to be fed, sell their souls, and seek friendship and pull instead of ability and merit. They are forced to work beneath their potential and dignity to survive, while being stripped of their manhood, their dignity and their pride. In the readers' minds, their rights have been violated. Yet for the second-handers, along with rest of humanity, this same fate provides them with their manhood, their dignity and their pride.

Thus these novels do not illustrate the existence of universal equal rights. Instead they design a map for a hierarchically structured society where the few who are strong have a moral obligation to justly rule over the many who are weak. The Invisible Man reluctantly acknowledges this, when he concedes that his antagonism towards the Christian woman who feeds and shelters him might be unjust. "Mary reminded me constantly that something was expected of me, some act of leadership, some newsworthy achievement; and I was torn between resenting her for it and loving her for the nebulous hope she kept alive."

The logic of all three stories is consistent and clear: The same circumstances applied to everyone can result in justice — or at least passive stoic submission — for the masses, but outrageous violations of rights for the elite few. The conclusion of this line of reasoning is that all men are not created equal. Some are endowed with greater talents, and must be accorded greater rights and privileges.

Aristocracy and Noblesse Oblige

The heroes of these novels should be leaders in charge of society; others should recognize their talents, principles and visions and agree to take orders from them. However the innate

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enthusiasm of youth convinces everyone that they should rule society. So how do we distinguish between Tod Clifton and the Invisible Man? And how do we discern Joseph Stalin from Howard Roarke? Why should society take orders from them? Or why should society refuse to take orders from them?

All children, at some point in their life, have been beaten, harassed and molested by bullies on the playground or in the schoolyard. And most children, when they grew bigger, older and stronger, took advantage of the opportunity to bully others. But many children never had the opportunity to reverse roles and play the bully. And many others found they could only bully a small segment of children in a limited number of situations. Ivan Denisovich, Tod Clifton, and the destitute elderly ex-slaves are not capable of bullying anyone. As a result, they acquiesce and accept their lowly status without complaint. They helplessly say, "I Can't."

The evolutionary process of bullying in human nature produces a robust hierarchy where the bigger, older and stronger —bully the smaller, younger and weaker. Throughout human history, the best bullies became the leaders and rulers in all arenas of society — from business to politics to religion — while the weakest and helpless became followers and subjects.

The heroes of these novels are capable of bullying others; but they make the conscious decision not to. They ignore and reject thousands of years of human societal evolution on the naïve belief in the utopian alternative proposal of universal respect for Inalienable Rights. They make the post-Jeffersonian moral decision to rise to their rightful place in society with the tacit or conscious consent of others, who they hope will honorably and correctly recognize their talents.

Sadly, nothing could be more absurd and irrational. To reject the established pecking order of society — that thousands of years of social evolution has created through the process of bullying, intimidation and violence — runs counter to human nature. It's as if they chose to express their youthful idealism in Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat, with the hope that the state would eventually wither away.

That these three heroes are punished, rejected by society and eventually fail is as predictable as the laws of gravity. For there is no conspiracy against Howard Roarke, the Invisible Man or Mei Kwei. Their inevitable rejection and failure is simply the culmination of individuals rationally acting in their own self-interests. After reading the first few chapters of these novels, an economist like James Buchanan could apply the calculus of public choice theory and skip to the inevitable conclusion.

These novels convey the classical lesson that rights are taken, not given. They are taken by bullies, not given to decent and honorable men. It is a rare event in human history for bullies to spontaneously decide to recognize the inherent dignity of the common man, and respect his

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individual rights. This is the story of the American Revolution: a group of bullies using force to take rights they claim as theirs. It's also the story of the American Dream, which is that henceforth, rights should not be taken by force, but should be respectfully granted to decent and honorable men.

Had the Founding Fathers failed in their insurrection against the King of England, they would have been hanged as traitors like the July 20th, 1944 conspirators of the Kreisau Circle. The eloquent and inspirational concept of Inalienable Jeffersonian Rights that we all hold so dear, would have been swept into the dustbin of history as an impudent juvenile outburst — like the proclamation of the French Revolution to reset the calendar to year one.

All that would have remained of the collected philosophical capital of the Founding Fathers is Hector's duty, his wife's tragedy, Troy's necessity, and the baby's cry. And the American Dream would have been replaced by the classic lessons of Homer and the Old Testament:

- You will be disappointed, confused, frustrated and betrayed
- You will be, beaten, tortured, enslaved and humiliated
- You will grow old, feeble, useless and helpless
- You will struggle, suffer, fail and die

At the dawn of the 21st Century, throughout the Western World, the collective masses who helplessly say "I can't," demanding their Inalienable Rights as slaves, is growing exponentially. While the number and quality of masters — with the discipline and resources to enslave and rule over them — is declining. The demise of Inalienable Rights, however tragic, appears to be inevitable. Human society and civilization must return to its natural state, as if Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers never existed. Or as if they failed and were executed as traitors to the Crown.
