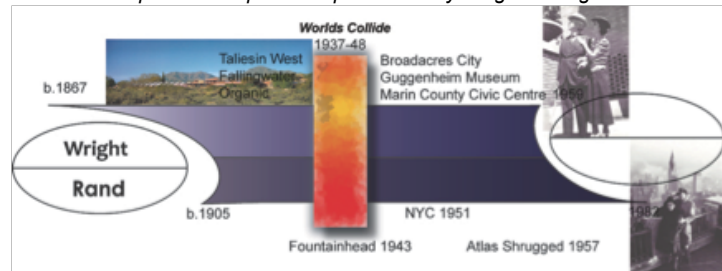


Beyond the Sum of Its Parts by Thomas T. Uemoto

This issue concludes an investigation into the explosive parallel lives and works of Ayn Rand and Frank Lloyd Wright. This series mainly draws from two literary sources: Rand's *The Fountainhead* and *Truth Against the World*: a compilation of speeches presented by Wright throughout his career.



Part 3: 'Worlds Collide'

Was the main character of the *Fountainhead*, Howard Roark, modeled after Wright as many believed? "No" -- according to both Rand and Wright. In Rand's research process for the *Fountainhead*, she took a job as a typist for the architect Ely J. Kahn in New York. There, she came to admire the work of Wright. In the *Fountainhead*, she fused the originality and daring aspects of Wright's design acumen into a part of Roark's character.

Did Art imitate Life or did Life imitate Art in this case?

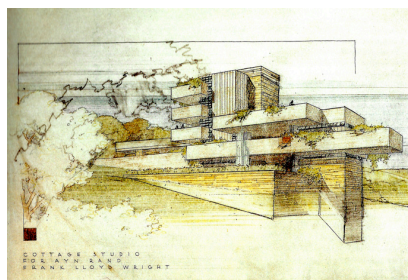
This is a good question and a scary one too. Many have asked the question if the Roark character was unattainable in principle. Rand would say 'No', that such men existed. "When I started writing," Rand recalls, "I approached the task of literature and began to study philosophy. I discovered that I was in profound disagreement with all the existing philosophies -- particularly their codes of morality. Therefore, I had to do my own thinking. I had to discover and present the kind of ideas and premises that make an ideal man possible - in order to define what kind of convictions would result in the character of an ideal man." Many believed that the person who personified Howard Roark most closely was Rand's husband, Frank O'Connor. Wright, in later years, was quite critical of the artistic license that Rand took with the *Fountainhead*.

Their Views: Accord or Disparate?

Rand and Wright seemed to align on most of their fundamental beliefs. They were both strong influences in the reverence and advancement of the human spirit, America and Democracy, and the pursuit of Truth and Integrity. They both put a high premium on love and marriage while working through a lot of personal problems. One item that Rand and Wright seemed to be very far apart on was the concept of God and Nature. Rand clearly claimed atheism, while Wright steadfastly alluded to a higher force, stopping short of a belief in a singular deity.

In 1937 Rand first wrote to Wright, trying to get a meeting with him to talk about her new book (*The Fountainhead*) and explain to him what she was going to do and to get an interview with him. Wright was not interested. Eventually, Wright did read the book. About a year after the book was published (1944), Wright reached out to Rand with a letter that began: "Your thesis is *the Great One*." In 1946, Wright produced a rarely published design of a country cottage for Ayn and Frank. It was never built; Ayn's heart was to be in New York.

Around 1948, production was starting for the movie premiere of *The Fountainhead*. Wright was commissioned to design Roark's buildings for the movie. However, that fell thru, when "true to form", Wright demanded \$250,000 and final approval of the cast, script,



costumes, and the sets. Then, in 1948, in a speech at an American Institute of Architects conference in Houston, Texas, a questioner asked to 'hear Mr. Wright on the subject of that great piece of American literature *The Fountainhead*.' Wright shot back: "Well, that's very simple and as easily disposed of. I'm sure of this because I have not seen this movie-- which is forthcoming. (Ayn Rand) has absolutely mistaken and abused the privilege which she took to herself and is going to get people very badly mixed up if they are already in the gutter. But I don't think that it is going to hurt anyone who is in the gutter already. So I don't think you or I need worry much about it. I suspect it's a hideous deformation . . . of a great philosophy."

In Parts 1 & 2, we touched on how Rand's and Wright's philosophies played out after establishing their respective groundbreaking works. Wright's appeared to soar to never ending heights. During Wright's last 5 years (at age 87!) it seemed, according to Taliesin's Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, that "indeed, every month, saw the creation of newer forms, newer spaces, newer techniques of building and construction. His sketches were minimal because the idea was perfectly clear right from the inception of each project." In a 1957 interview with Mike Wallace, Wright beamed, "Now, I can just shake the designs out of my sleeve." Rand's twilight was not as prolific. Throughout her sixties and seventies (and the 1960s and 70s), Rand no longer had a blockbuster novel forthcoming. Instead she continued to articulate her philosophy through various interviews and articles. Still as a result, Rand's perspective, like Wright, took on a clear and focused statement. "Do you know," asked Rand, "that my personal crusade is not merely to fight collectivism, nor to fight altruism? They are only consequences, effects not causes. I am out after the real cause, the real root of evil on earth - the irrational."

Hypocrisy, Compromise or Irony: The Individual v. Collaboration
"Don't worry, they're all against me. But I have one advantage: they don't know what they want. I do." -- Howard Roark
In spite of Rand and Wright's perception as being "great individualists", they were actually great collaborators. Rand's own circle called themselves, tongue in cheek, "The Collective". Among the "members" was a then young and shy Alan Greenspan (who would later become chairman of the Federal Reserve Board). In his book, "The Age of Turbulence" Greenspan describes the profound influence that Ayn Rand had on his career. Did this influence, also, have effects on the economical predicament that our 'democracy' faces today? *That's another essay.* Wright's had his personal shortcomings that added to a perception of being difficult to work with. "Your jealousy" Olgivanna - Wright's wife - once confronted him, "is of such a cosmic nature that if you were to subscribe to the idea of reincarnation you would have to come back many times to overcome it." But there is no doubt as to the fruits borne out of the Taliesin Fellowship. Wright often mentioned "partners", and "fingers on a hand" in reference to his professional collaborations. The concept of collaboration was most evident was in Rand and Wright's marriages. Ayn Rand's marriage spanned over 50 years to Frank O'Connor and profusely credits her husband, a fine artist in his own right, with her success - especially in regards to the *Fountainhead*. Wright had two previous marriages or "dress rehearsals" before Olgivanna, "my first wife". From the very beginning of their relationship, there was a mutual exchange that marked the course of their lives spent together. "He taught me to see the visible world, and I taught him to see the invisible world", Olgivanna Wright once remarked. A few weeks before his passing, Wright turned to Olgivanna and lamented, "Do you know who I wish would come here and have tea with us? William Blake. There would be a remarkable bond between us just as there is one between you and me. And it occurred to me recently that in the distant future when they think of us, they will think of us as one. We blend, Olgivanna. We are one."

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