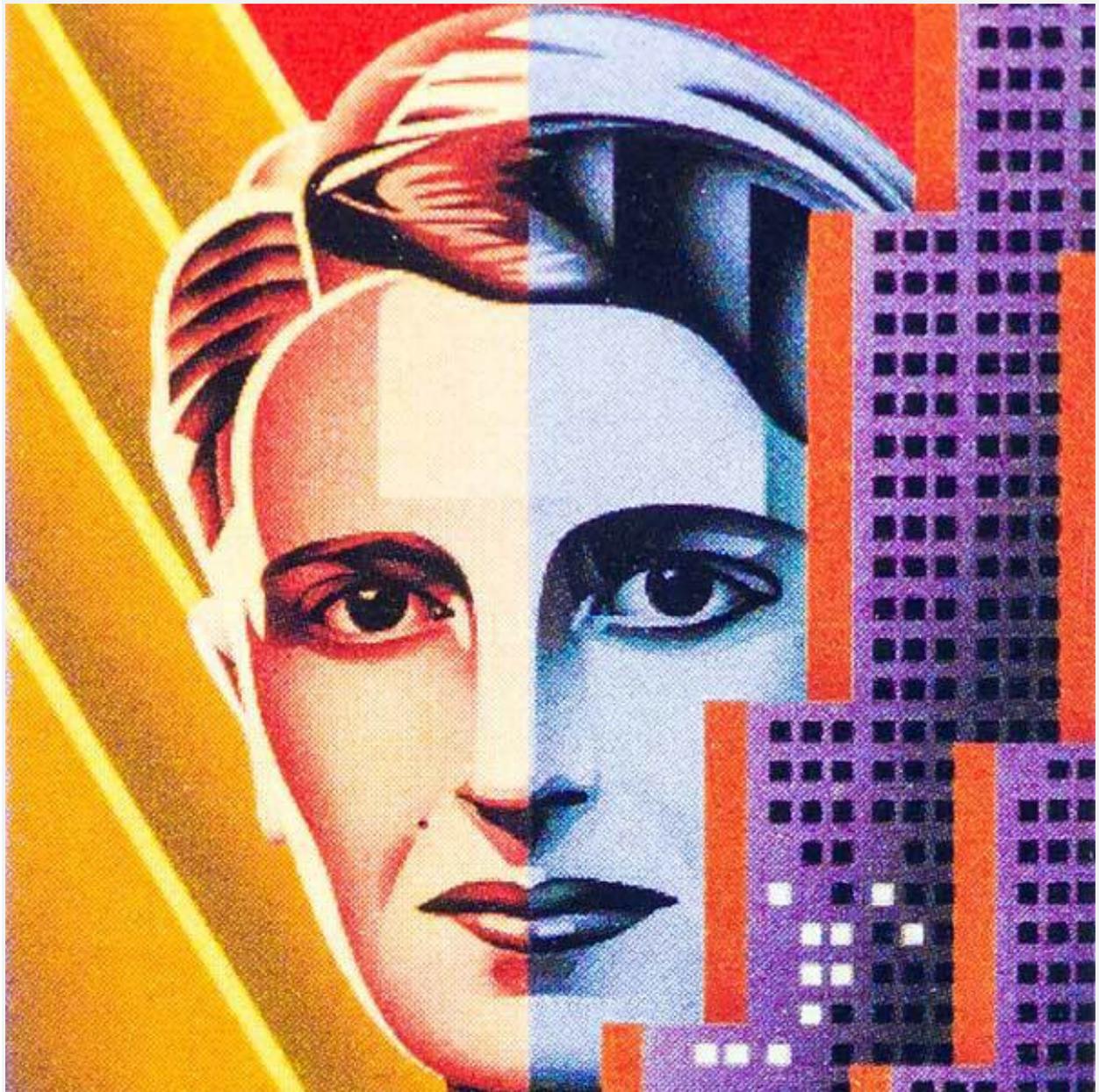


So What If Ayn Rand Collected Social Security?



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Critics of Ayn Rand often claim that she received Social Security, which supposedly invalidates every word she ever wrote. This gets repeated on social media a lot — there’s even an “[Ayn Rand collected Social Security](#)” Facebook page. And when it’s reported on left-leaning websites it’s often implied that not only did she receive it, but she did so by fraudulent means because she collected not under the name Rand, but of O’Connor, neglecting to mention that O’Connor was her legal, married name.

This is supposed to make her a hypocrite, but I’ve never seen proof that she signed up for benefits or accepted them (her defenders claim a lawyer for Rand applied on her behalf using Power of Attorney). Whenever I challenge someone to show me the evidence, they always back down. Then I usually get some vague story about how she died penniless from bad choices and took government assistance. So what if she did? Rand and her husband paid into the system for decades whether they wanted to or not. Why should she have left money on the table? To appease her critics?

I’ve yet to encounter anyone who claims hypocrisy on Rand’s part that can direct me to any of her writing specifically addressing Social Security. So I decided to do a little research myself, and it turns out she did.

This quote comes from the essay “The Question of Scholarships” and was published in *The Objectivist Newsletter* June, 1966 — a

decade before she allegedly began drawing Social Security benefits:

Since there is no such thing as the right of some men to vote away the rights of others, and no such thing as the right of the government to seize the property of some men for the unearned benefit of others — the advocates and supporters of the welfare state are morally guilty of robbing their opponents, and the fact that the robbery is legalized makes it morally worse, not better. The victims do not have to add self-inflicted martyrdom to the injury done to them by others; they do not have to let the looters profit doubly, by letting them distribute the money exclusively to the parasites who clamored for it. Whenever the welfare-state laws offer them some small restitution, the victims should take it. ... The same moral principles and considerations apply to the issue of accepting social security, unemployment insurance or other payments of that kind. It is obvious, in such cases, that a man receives his own money which was taken from him by force, directly and specifically, without his consent, against his own choice. Those who advocated such laws are morally guilty, since they assumed the “right” to force employers and unwilling co-workers. But the victims, who opposed such laws, have a clear right to any refund of their own money — and they would not advance the cause of freedom if they left their money, unclaimed, for the benefit of the welfare-state administration.

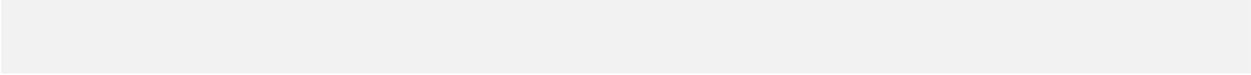
So there's your proof. Her actions did not contradict her written words; they complemented them.

Ayn Rand is a polarizing figure who evokes strong reactions. I understand that her work is not going to appeal to everybody. If you don't like her books, don't read them. If you find her philosophy of Objectivism objectionable, don't subscribe to it. But smearing her personality or making up stories about her supposed hypocrisy does *not* negate her ideas. And that's what we are dealing with here. I've never witnessed one of her critics respond to or repudiate her ideas other than to say, "selfishness is not a virtue" or dismiss her work as something for "misunderstood teenagers."

And if one can't deal in ideas, they attack the person. "Ya know, she was addicted to speed."

That's true, but she wasn't scoring crystal meth off the street. She was prescribed Benzedrine by a doctor while writing *The Fountainhead*. She used it for decades, too, but gets no sympathy for *her* addiction disease. Rand wasn't hip, so her drug use is a liability while other popular writers are lauded for theirs. Jack Kerouac wrote on speed and William Burroughs on heroin, but that's part of their cool mystique.

I don't understand why there is such hate on the left for a successful, independent woman who was an anti-racist, pro-choice, atheist critic of the Vietnam War.



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