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BUSTER**

Perhaps one of the most potent methods to elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of a protagonist, a foil illuminates the meaning of a work with character balance and meaningful juxtaposition. In *The Fountainhead*, Ayn Rand indeed makes use of such a foil, by the name of Dominique Francon, to bring out the unique characteristics and qualities of Howard Roark into the limelight, thus highlighting the very philosophy he embodies: objectivism. Although both Dominique and Roark represent the essence of Rand's interpretation of selfishness that she attempts, and succeeds, to convey, the contrasting manner in which they present themselves to society demonstrates the potential of Rand's philosophy in action and how it functions in the real world.

From the onset of the novel, Howard Roark's brilliant and laconic nature is evident. He is characterized with such an enormous uniqueness that emulating this very character would be difficult, if not impossible. His intrinsic affinity for architecture, a raw talent, is negatively portrayed by society. As a nonconformist, he is misunderstood by the majority of society who values opinion over art itself. In Dominique and Roark's first encounter, her initial impression of him immediately throws the reader off-guard: his usual cold look, which repulses others, immediately draws her in, as she recalls a "cold brilliance" and empowering "strength" within Roark. She thus symbolizes one of the few characters that understand the enormity of what he encapsulates and truly understand the remarkability of individualism Rand tries to put forth. The difference Dominique offers in character reveals that she is at once eerily similar, yet a glaring counterpoint in Roark. With a vivid knack for the truth, she truly appreciates art in its raw

state and not for the fame and success it brings. Like Roark, she does not ingratiate herself with others. By having an awareness of the “ great” qualities Roark possesses, she herself demonstrates an understanding for Rand’s advocacy of selfishness. For instance, when Dominique talks about her hatred towards mankind, she alludes to a corruption, a lack of understanding of objectivism, or the “ right” way to live one’s life. In a sense, she is one of the few characters with a mindset attuned to selflessness, yet she hides this selfishness because she is aware of the consequences of a society that shuns. She envies what Roark is able to achieve, the ease at which he is able to fully yet unknowingly embrace selfishness for art itself in disregard for outside opinion. The difference between the two characters sees its root in Dominique’s hesitance to truly become a selfish, individualistic character because unlike Roark, she cares about how she fits in with society. She thus demonstrates a need to hide what both she and Roark have, emphasizing on the far-reaching greatness that Roark represents.

Ayn Rand utilizes Roark himself as the epitome of objectivism. The interactions between Dominique and Roark not only highlight the qualities Roark embodies, but also the overarching concept of individualism itself and how it is portrayed by society. By giving Roark a god-like complex, Dominique is in a sense a less extreme version of Roark that is more attuned to society. As a conformist rather than a nonconformist, she only inwardly displays the news in which Rand glorifies, in fear of being “ shunned” by society or misunderstood. Through Dominique’s reluctance to fully embrace a selfish character, Rand suggests the discordance between the general

views of society and an individualist standpoint. She notes a certain corruption within society that is unable to accept, or grasp, this notion of objectivism. As expressed by Dominique, she would rather “destroy” Roark herself rather than see him get destroyed by a society that may never understand his greatness. In a sense, she cannot bear to see such a flawless idea get destroyed. Thus, when she criticizes Roark in the novel, she seemingly criticizes himself and his art in a very twisted manner. Perhaps, true art as an outcome of objectivism is too “beautiful” and personal to be shown in public. Dominique ultimately serves as a foil to Roark not only to accentuate his character, but to express both a great concept that is nowhere near suitable for a corrupted society. In essence, the originality and nonconformist within Roark will eventually put him down.

While Dominique’s ideas of objectivism parallel with those of Rand and emphasizes on the greatness of Roark’s character, her behavior further accentuates objectivism yet opposes the behavior of Roark; it is at this point where she and Roark truly diverge. Her behavior brings out the social sacrifices one must make for selfishness. The closing segment of the book witnesses a character development in Dominique: once afraid of the reaction of society, she then fully joins Roark’s side, breaking her pessimistic barrier and stripping herself of her fears. No longer vulnerable to the retaliation of society, she reclaims her old job on “The Banner.” The full circle ending truly exemplifies the greatness of objectivism, where Roark is depicted as a figure high up in the sky, encapsulating the image of Rand (and Dominique’s) ideal, perfect man. In Dominique’s eyes, Roark ultimately stands triumphant.