

Outsiders

Description

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Some would-be achievers like to position themselves as outsiders. An outsider can provide a fresh point of view. An outsider is also someone with an *outside chance*, as opposed to a *front runner*. That way others expect less of them. How can someone outside the mainstream be expected to capitalise on insider benefits, or know as much as an insider? When it happens, the outsiderâ??s success is all the more remarkable.

French President Emmanuel Macron campaigned on the claim that he was an outsider, as did his main rival Marine le Pen. So did Donald Trump. Considering their connections, credentials, and support base, they barely appear as outsiders at all. We are entitled to ask sceptically: outsider relative to what?

Speaking as an outsider

Hereâ??s an example of outsider prose. Itâ??s Trumpâ??s speech at Liberty University Graduation, reported in full on the TIME website. Acknowledging its founder the evangelist Jerry Falwell, Trump (or his speechwriter) said:

> â??no one has ever achieved anything significant without a chorus of critics standing on the sidelines explaining why it canâ??t be done. Nothing is easier or more pathetic than being a critic, because theyâ??re people that canâ??t get the job done. â?¦ Relish the opportunity to be an **outsider**. Embrace that label â?? being an outsider is fine, embrace the label â?? because itâ??s the outsiders who change the world and who make a real and lasting difference. The more that a broken system tells you that youâ??re wrong, the more certain you should be that you must keep pushing ahead, you must keep pushing forward.â?•

Thatâ??s pure Ayn Rand. In her novel *The Fountainhead*, the philosopher has her architect hero say during a court case in defiance of the oppressive forces of mediocracy around him:

> â??Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps down new roads armed with nothing but their own vision. Their goals differed, but they all had this in common: that the step was first, the road new, the vision unborrowed, and the response they received â?? hatred. The great

> creators â?? the thinkers, the artists, the scientists, the inventors â?? stood alone against the men of their time. Every great new thought was opposed. Every great new invention was denounced. â?¦ But the men of unborrowed vision went ahead. They fought, they suffered and they paid. But they wonâ?• (664).

The link between modern politics and Ayn Randâ??s stridently conservative outsider is well made in various articles. See a recent Guardian piece: The new age of Ayn Rand and my post: All watched over by Ayn Rand.

Amongst its many failings, Randâ??s self-centred and melodramatic philosophy conceals the fact that the (Randian) heroâ??s starting point is that of critic. How do you establish that the system you are in is broken, stultifying, or oppressive without first establishing yourself as a critic of that system?

Randâ??s hero is however much more covert in his criticism than Trump, and maintains the high moral ground throughout his misadventures. In this respect, the current problem is not that Trump is a Randian, but he is not Randian enough! Also see post: Conservative hermeneutics.



Reference

- Freedland, Jonathan. 1917. The new age of Ayn Rand: How she won over Trump and Silicon Valley. *Guardian*, (Monday 10 April 2017 18.49 BST) link.
- Rand, Ayn. 1972. *The Fountainhead*. London: Grafton

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rcoyne99