

jAYNe Cobb, The AYN Rand of the Whedonverse: Selecting Texts in Narrative Ethics

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As early as our first *Slayage* paper and our book *The Existential Joss Whedon*, we have argued that the works of Whedon can and should be read as a form of narrative ethics. A major difficulty facing those of us who reject a principlist rational ethics in favor of the moral and literary imagination is deciding which texts to rely upon and how best to read them. We contend that Whedon's texts represent a kind of communitarian (post)-Christian love ethics. However, what is to prevent someone who leans more toward an anti-communitarian, individualist ethics of egoism from recommending the works of Ayn Rand, for example? We read the story arc of *Firefly/Serenity*'s Jayne Cobb as a narrative answer to this difficult question. Jayne Cobb can be read as an Ayn Rand type of hero. He even has a town named after him complete with a statue erected in his honor. Paradoxically, Jayne was being honored for his inadvertent generosity, not for his selfishness. In the course of our narrative argument, we make reference to Paul Ryan, Mitt Romney's vice-presidential running mate in the 2012 Presidential election. Ryan seemed to believe that the fact that he distributed *Atlas Shrugged* to his employees would make him seem more intellectual. His political handlers soon disabused him of that illusion, but it does raise the question about the kind of books you read and the values that they lead you to, or tend to confirm.