

# Game Review: The Genius of BioShock Against the Objectivism of Rand

## by Boran Göher

BioShock is a 2007 game by the game studio 2K Boston. Widely considered to be a masterpiece, game reviews praising BioShock as a great game are a dime a dozen. But today, we are going to be focusing much more intently on the political commentary it offers, covering the messages of the overarching narrative of the game. But before that, we should get a few things out of the way. First, the more technical and artistic aspects.

At this point, BioShock is a 14-year-old game. Despite this, the graphics still hold up perfectly. It is obviously no Red Dead Redemption 2, but the beauty of this 14-year-old game is still something to be admired. It is not just that the graphics were good for their time, they have a quality that has allowed them to persist as long as they did. This quality was created in part by the effort poured into the meshes and textures, and in part by the great art direction. BioShock is set in a 60s underwater city, and the feeling of claustrophobia that is unavoidable in such a city is reflected in the art direction, along with a chic 60s aesthetic. The city itself, Rapture, deserves a mention as well. Between the flooded building, the massively tension-inducing pipes running across the buildings, and the general presence of futuristic technology in a 60s dress, emulating a true steampunk atmosphere, the worldbuilding in this game is incredible.

Of course, it is of no value to build an incredible world if you are not going to create an appropriate atmosphere to go along with it. Thankfully, the developers did a very good job with this, most gamers classifying it as one of the most low-key creepy games they have ever played. The scarcity of resources, the terrifying sounds and visuals of the enemies, and the level design keep you at your toes at all times. The sound design and the music should be mentioned explicitly, as they keep up a good quality at all times.

As a side note, BioShock contains some of the most iconic designs in gaming history. The enemy "Big Daddy" is one of the most recognizable enemies in not just gaming, but all entertainment. Finally, the game just "runs good", which improves all the previous aspects discussed.

Now to review the meat of the game, the gameplay. For the most part, BioShock can be thought of as a fancy patisserie cake. The actual cake is pretty standard, but the various dressings on it make all the difference. The base of the cake is analogous to the standard FPS gameplay BioShock offers. Indeed, the main mechanics of the game are typical first-person shooter mechanics we are all accustomed to. They are plain like the base of the cake, they offer no additional value in differentiating it from other cakes, but the base is good enough to be able to carry the dressings.

Well, what are the dressings, then? The sci-fi special powers are the main ones. The player character unlocks many abilities like electrocution, hypnosis, flame-throwing, and some more interesting powers that I will not spoil here. In addition, there is some variance in the weapons department. We have the traditional shotgun and the machine gun, but also a few fun weapons that I will, again, not spoil here. But no good cake has only sweet dressings and BioShock is a good cake. From my descriptions up to now, it might seem like BioShock plays similarly to a power fantasy game, but this is not the case. Scarcity is ever-present in Rapture, and you are not exempt from it. Both ammo and "EVE", the special currency that allows you to use your special powers are scarce and the game also forces you to choose between new powers and upgrades to existing powers at times, creating some sense of character customization.

All these things introduce variance to the gameplay, helping keep it fun for almost the entirety of the game. Almost is the keyword. For the very last few hours, the gameplay mechanics become stagnant and can grow to be a bit boring, especially since you have become strong enough not to care about most enemies. In that aspect, the variance is somewhat subpar, which is my only major complaint.

Now before we can discuss narrative, we must lastly consider the story, the story in the foreground, that is. One of the greatest points of the story is the pull-in. The game starts with you being introduced to Rapture after a plane crash, and due to both the events on screen and the brilliance of Rapture, the story has an immediately gripping start. After that, the game retains a constant mystery element. As you explore the now fallen city, you will be constantly attempting to unravel the truths behind the fall of Rapture, and in the way, you will meet some of the greatest twists of gaming history. Thinking of all-time greats in gaming history, there is something else that must be mentioned: BioShock contains maybe the most iconic line in all of gaming history. This is coupled with an incredible twist, which only exacerbates the greatness of this line. Of course, I will not spoil that moment in this article.

Before we move on to the narrative, there is one point that I figure affects both the narrative and the story of the game that must be covered. BioShock retains a good balance of direct and indirect storytelling at all times. The general beats of both the player character's and the city's story are explained directly, and whatever is not explained can be inferred easily. But if you put in the effort to search for environmental clues, extra materials, and optional dialogue you will learn much more about the story of Rapture and all those names you kept hearing about in the main story. The extra information also really helps put the narrative of the game in perspective. That is not the only extra information that puts the narrative of the game in perspective. This information, however, does not come through the game itself, but through understanding Ayn Rand.

For the uninitiated, Ayn Rand is one of those extreme libertarian types, actually, scratch that; Ayn Rand is THE extreme libertarian type. Okay, she actually deserves a bit more of a description than that. Ayn Rand is the founder of the political thought

of Objectivism which puts self-interest above all else as the most ethical sense of all. The philosophy is rooted in the logic that if all actors of society act solely in self-interest, the outcome will be the one that is most beneficial for society as a whole. Sure, along the way, some people will be left in the dumps, but that is okay for they were undeserving, to begin with. Society should be structured in a way that allows weak people to fail and strong people to prosper, with neither safety nets nor chains that bind those at the top, or so Objectivists say. If you have played the game, you should have noticed the similarities with Andrew Ryan. For those who have not, Andrew Ryan is an industrialist who founded an underwater city, Rapture, with almost no taxation and regulation, who also vehemently defends an ideology very similar to Rand's. In short Andrew Ryan is an Ayn Rand expy, and Rapture is a Randian paradise.

The links do not end there, and to understand what links exist, we need to clarify a few terms and key concepts within Objectivism to see these links. First of all, Atlas. Atlas is a titan in Greek mythology that was tasked with holding up the sky. Over the years, Atlas' role has evolved to hold the entire world on his shoulders throughout the western canon, makes for a better image after all those things humanity has learned regarding the earth and the sky, I suppose. Within Rand's work, Atlas roughly symbolizes "those who carry the world on their shoulders". Artists, scientists, industry barons, engineers, philosophers, etc. Those in this group are also claimed to be "free men", which is a concept often compared with the "parasite". Free men create their own value, are strong enough to rule over their world. Parasites, on the other hand, are weak and deserve to be eliminated through social elimination, to avoid this they cling to government programs and charity, which is immoral for an Objectivist. One other thing to know is altruism, or how altruism is rejected by Objectivists. Altruism is defined as the sense of moral obligation of helping others, which is thoroughly rejected by Rand and her supporters. Lastly, I will reiterate that Rapture is a Randian Paradise.

Shortly, we must also note a few key concepts of Rand's philosophy. The central piece is free will. Without free will, Rand's prescribed Social Darwinism cannot take place, the wheat cannot be separated from the chaff, and society's progress is hindered. To Rand, many things are a violation of free will. Excessive taxation and regulation, charity work, social government programs, excessive legislation, etc. Some of these are argued to take away the free will of the strong which then hinders society's growth. A common argument among contemporary libertarians as well. The other side of the coin is that safety nets and such impair free will because they create parasitic addictions in men and prevent them from acting on their will. This completely outlandish argument is almost exclusive to Objectivism.

An extension of free will is the concept of the free market. As expected, Rand is a big proponent of "a truly free market". This phrase takes on a few different meanings throughout philosophy and political science, but Rand's ideas seem to be a bit disadvantageous for the working class. In particular, the "lower" classes deserve to be punished by the system because that is the natural order of things and it benefits society as a whole. So, we should just let unregulated markets stomp on the less

well-off class because if they did not deserve to be stomped on, they would be more well-off anyway. Now, this is not very eloquent logic by any means, and if I were a university professor that had a piece of this on an exam, I would give at most half a point of partial credit for recognizing that this is circular logic and that Rand is actually arguing that people that get stomped on deserve getting stomped on because they are getting stomped on.

Finally, let us take one last look at this self-interest business. From everything you have read up to this point, you might be thinking that Rand would condone boundless hedonism. Well, somewhat. Rand argues that a hedonist is a selfish man “without a self”. [\(1\)](#) The hedonist is not a man who seeks to live the best he can as a human, but a beast chasing a sub-human desire. Yet, her definition of what is human and what is not is vague to the point of non-existence and thus, she cannot act on this line of thought in her political philosophy. Rand’s society cannot act out against the very hedonism she condemns. All she can do is to advise people against the pursuit of vaguely defined sub-human desires which she deems undesirable. Yet, since her ideal world values self-interest overall, it is very weak against the dangers of hedonism, if one indeed believes such a danger exists, that is.

So, how do all of these ties back to BioShock? Well, I believe that I have mentioned that Andrew Ryan is largely an Ayn Rand expy. But to see further, I propose that we take all we learned and take a trip to Rapture in order to see what actually happened in a Randian Paradise. Warning: The following sections of this article will contain heavy spoilers. I have avoided spoiling as far as I could, but now we are at the limit as we will need to discuss the information revealed in the game to finalize the arguments that have been precluded to.

Now, what is Rapture? Rapture is the most ambitious project of the famous industrialist Andrew Ryan, who has grown tired of what he perceives are chains that bind him and wants to create a society of free men. Much like Ayn Rand, Andrew Ryan had fled the Russian Empire after the Bolshevik Revolution, believing that parasites had taken control of it. Ryan was able to find some happiness in America, but that was short-lived as well. Beginning with Roosevelt’s New Deal, America too was plunged into “despotism of the parasite”, he felt. At one point, the American Government attempted to nationalize a personal forest of Ryan’s in order to turn it into parkland. In response, Ryan burned down the forest, just so that “parasites” could not wrestle the control out of his hands. At last, Ryan decided that he had enough of the U.S.A and began his most ambitious project: Building a city in the middle of the Atlantic.

Many claimed this project was impossible and the choice of location was madness. Yet, Andrew Ryan had a very peculiar way of justifying the choice of location, as peculiar as it is appropriate for a city built in the depths of the ocean. Ryan felt that the only place that he could be free of the interference of the parasite was the depth of the ocean. In his words, “It was not impossible to build Rapture at the bottom of the sea. It was impossible to build it anywhere else.”, and so he began to build Rapture with his personal fortune. For the first decade or so, Rapture was everything Andrew

had hoped. The economic and scientific development within Rapture was unprecedented. At the top of all this was Ryan with his position as the leader of the City Council.

Yet, unbeknownst to Ryan, the very things that would destroy Rapture were also created during this time. A brilliant genetic scientist had created "ADAM", a new substance that allowed humans to modify their own genetic information on demand. It was described as a "benign form of cancer", allowing the user to modify their genes by replacing native cells of their body with unstable stem cells. ADAM had two major drawbacks, however. The first was that it was extremely addictive. Because of the unstable nature of the replacement stem cells, the body needed a constant flow of ADAM in order to keep functioning. Unless ADAM was continually supplied the genetically modified person would experience extreme withdrawal symptoms and eventually would be driven insane. The other problem was the supply of ADAM. The first known supply was a certain type of sea slug, but as this was an abysmal amount, scientists made little orphaned girls hosts for the sea slugs which allowed for greater production. The little girls were the only known compatible hosts. At one point, one of the scientists brainwashed the girls into collecting ADAM from dead bodies. Yet even at this point, Ryan refused to intervene, as doing so would have violated his ideals.

Subsequently, smuggler and conman Frank Fontaine was gaining power by using his business Fontaine Fisheries as a front for his smuggling operations. With this power, Fontaine supported the scientist who discovered ADAM. At the same time, Fontaine used his wealth to build orphanages and food and shelter sources for poor people. This was not particularly in-line with the philosophy of Rapture, but he was a free man, not prohibited from doing so. If the existence of these faculties has not yet tipped you to a problem of Rapture's, I will simply state the problem: Wealth inequality. While the top class of Rapture was living in all the luxury imaginable, the bottom class was suffocating under the lack of regulations and social programs. We will come back to the problems this, in turn, created later on, so keep it in mind.

You might be thinking that these do not look like apocalyptic problems, but then they combined. Firstly, ADAM was very, very popular, "Everybody wanted it, everybody needed it.". Due to the deal, he cut with the scientists that developed ADAM, Fontaine had the right to sell plasmid technology created from ADAM in order to make a profit. The high demand for Fontaine meant that he could earn massive wealth in a short time. Furthermore, for some amount of time, Fontaine's company Fontaine Futuristics was the only company that could produce this new technology, placing them in monopoly territory. Frank Fontaine soon grew to be as powerful as Andrew Ryan in his own city, which would later cause a power struggle between the two. But as great as he was, even Fontaine could not supply enough ADAM to meet the demand. Indeed, not a shocking conclusion as Rapture physically could not produce enough ADAM to accommodate the demands of its denizens.

In a few years, the struggle between Fontaine and Ryan grew, with Ryan suspecting Fontaine of smuggling and murder and Fontaine having no intention to give up what

was his. At the same time, civil unrest in Rapture was only growing. The struggle between Ryan and Fontaine, the wealth inequality, and the growing number of withdrawal-suffering ADAM addicts in the streets all contributed to the growing chaos. Eventually, Ryan grew increasingly suspicious of Fontaine's guilt and arranged a raid in order to arrest him. Fontaine responded by saying that if he was going to go out, he was going to go out "guns blazing". This, unsurprisingly, created a shootout where Fontaine was declared to be dead. In the aftermath, Fontaine Futuristics was given to Andrew Ryan by the city council, a move which was seen by many as Ryan killing a man and taking his company. This added fuel to the fire of civil unrest.

After all this unrest, a man only known as Atlas appeared and began subtly recruiting for a rebellion in the aforementioned food and shelter sources of Fontaine. At this time, the streets had already become engulfed in complete chaos. A short amount of time later, an all-out civil war between Atlas and Ryan broke out. Atlas was able to get people on his side by appealing to the poor and pointing out the threat of the maddened addicts, while Ryan used his existing wealth and power to fight back. All this has brought Rapture to the state it is in at the beginning of the game. By all accounts, the player character arrives in a Rapture that has already fallen.

Now, let us do a situation check, where I will be discussing how the game reflects the realities of Ayn Rand's ideas. This will be the first check of the two that we will do. At this point, there is nothing left of the economic prosperity of Rapture, civil war and addiction have made every part of the city a death part, little girls are harvesting ADAM from dead bodies accompanied by big metal machines, parts of the city have been flooded due to inadequate maintenance and damage from all the chaos, and Atlas as the leader of the main rebellion is forced to rely on the player character to get anything done, people are still starving on the streets, and I could probably write one more paragraph of these if I had the time. But how did this happen? Well, turns out that Rand's insistence on free markets and lack of regulation created an atmosphere in which immoral experiments funded by con men can create substances that can drive the entire city to the point of maddening addiction. In addition, the unregulated market immensely oppresses the lower classes and causes an entire civil war. It seems that Rand's most basic principles caused her own paradise to fall to its death, a bit ironic. Talking of ironic, remind me, what did Rand think of hedonists like degenerate drug addicts?

All these are horrible, but now, the player character has arrived, perhaps he will become a savior for the city. Now, when he first arrives in the city, the player character, canonically named Jack, starts working together with Atlas in order to defeat Ryan, which he needs to do in order to leave the city. One by one, Jack defeats the "brilliant minds of Rapture", artists, scientists, and engineers who have all degenerated into immoral monsters after a decade's life in Rapture. Eventually, Jack reaches Andrew Ryan in his office, who then reveals that Atlas has been controlling Jack all along using a brainwashing tick of Jack's. This is obviously a huge reveal, but it is followed by the revelation that Jack is actually a lab-grown child, and everything, including the plane crash, was orchestrated by Atlas.

And at this point, Andrew Ryan has well realized that his utopia was only a dream and that his city has wholly failed. The character of Andrew Ryan divulges from Ayn Rand. Ryan asks Jack to kill him so that he does not live to see himself live like one of the parasites he so despised. He is so steady on this point that, when Jack hesitates in doing so, he uses Jack's brainwashing tick in order to force Jack into killing him. You might be wondering how this means that Andrew Ryan has divulged from Ayn Rand. It is simple, Ayn Rand just did not have the courage that Andrew Ryan had. At the end of her life, Rand had become a "welfare queen", living only reliant on the various social security programs offered by the government. (2) I am not, in any way, insinuating that Ayn Rand should have chosen to die instead of receiving welfare, that would be me committing the very cruelty that I am criticizing Rand about. Yet, it is clear that Ayn Rand was not as firm a believer in her ideology as Andrew Ryan was. As an aside, neither is her foundation. The Ayn Rand Institute, an institute promoting Ayn Rand's ideas and political desires (surprise, I know), has accepted a government loan given in response to the COVID-19 crisis. (3) The irony needs no explanation, I presume.

After Ryan is killed, Jack is scrambling to reach Atlas, who has been revealed, to be Frank Fontaine in disguise. In the words of the man himself, "There ain't no Atlas, kid. Never was.". At this point, Fontaine has revealed that he has used Jack as his ace in the hole after Ryan had turned the war in his favor by using a newly developed pheromone system to control the addicted people of Rapture. With the help of the first scientist that had discovered ADAM, who has become decidedly disgusted with all things it led to, Jack manages to gradually rid himself of his brainwashing tick and moves to confront Fontaine. Jack finds out that Fontaine himself has become addicted to ADAM after modifying himself to a point where he thought he would be unbeatable. However, with the help of the aforementioned scientist and the little girls that she has rehabilitated, Jack manages to defeat Fontaine, and Fontaine dies, this time for real. Canonically, Jack takes the brainwashed little girls to the surface with him and helps them overcome the brainwashing.

Now, can we say that Jack was the savior of Rapture? No. There was nothing that was saved. Rapture is still a fallen city without clear leadership, with food, shelter, and addiction problems. Jack was at most a "clean-up service" who cleaned the mess Rapture had become but chose not to build anything on it and go to the surface and live there. All the problems people have been cleared out and the city has been restored to something of a blank state, albeit with all its problems, but it has not been saved. Still, without a doubt, Jack was the best thing that ever happened to Rapture after things started going south, and if somebody wants to rebuild Rapture as a more reasonable city, they now have something to build on, thanks to Jack.

So, let us conduct the second situation check. This one will show just how direly Rand's philosophy has failed. The most important point: As a direct result of Rand's ideology, a conman gained power, appropriated the work of many great people who then grew to despise the way it was used, orchestrated his own death, masqueraded as Atlas, the very thing that should have kept Rand's utopia afloat, and then used his ace in the hole to defeat the very representation of Rand and the builder of her

paradise. I feel the need to reiterate this point that BioShock has, in a stroke of genius, pointed out. The thing that will destroy a Randian utopia is con men pretending to be the ones holding it up, all the while leeching on the efforts of those who are truly great. It is not hard to translate this message into any concurrent society when we take a look at all the true parasites who are building their fortunes off appropriating the work of the powerless and corrupting the very government that is supposed to protect the common people to protect themselves instead.

But what else can we say? The total lack of regulation has made things like smuggling and drug addiction propagate through Rand's utopia and shows us another unrealistic part of her paradise. The means that she adopts will simply not result in the outcomes that she desires. The way that the civil war occurs in Rapture clearly shows that, besides being unethical and idiotic, forced Eco-Social Darwinism is not a good pillar to build a society on, simply by the virtue of being impossible to administer. Even if you accept that some people are naturally worth less than others and deserve to be filtered out of the usage of society's limited resources, it is unrealistic to think that these people will not at some point unite against you and become a greater power, not all things in society are done at an individual level, obviously. And even if they themselves cannot efficiently use this power, some con man will come along and use the power for his benefit, which will destroy the balances of your society. Not that the balances of Rand's utopia are well-calibrated, of course, even in the best times of Rapture, we can observe that the wealth inequality is immense, all the while the city itself endorses a cutthroat mentality that discourages the wealthy from helping the poor.

The problems do not end there, either. There is one elephant in the room we have not addressed. And the game has taken quite a dramatic approach to this, so I will simply retell the related events in order to reach my audience the way that the game did. One scientist makes a life-changing discovery. Under the rules of Rand's society, she must seek out a donor to fund her research. The only one she can find is a conman, but she is desperate. More scientists are introduced to the research, and to make it immediately profitable, the conman's company begins brainwashing exploiting orphaned little girls in order to become able to turn in an immediate profit. The scientist is disgusted by all these, but at this point, she is powerless to stop it, she must watch as her potentially life-saving discovery is now enslaving little girls and driving hordes of people insane due to the addiction. If somehow this has not made my point clear, A Randian society, in trying to accelerate the growth of societal gains by promoting ideas of self-interest, creates a situation in which all people but those only driven by self-interest with a backing of meaningful wealth can profit from these gains. The scientist is tortured by her morals, but the capital already owns the rights to the technology. The girls are obviously hurt, but they never had the power, to begin with. The working-class people who all become addicted go insane at the end, yet they never had the means to fight the tide under a Randian system. In effect, they were forced to become addicted. In a Randian society, nobody but the owners of capital, and those who are able to, and chose to, worship that capital in self-interest can benefit from societal gains, even if everyone is acting in self-interest, even though it was argued that all people would have found their happiness if they acted in



self-interest. Ayn Rand's main claim is thusly refuted by BioShock. This story also demonstrates the dangers of the unchecked practice of science, but I think I hardly have to elaborate on that.

Lastly, even the person who we have identified as the best thing to happen to Rapture, Jack, is not able to save the city. He does almost everything correctly in order to heal Rapture in the short term, but that is a problem itself. Rapture has so far gone into ruin that even a messianic figure cannot save it. Jack can only provide a clean-up for the city, as we have previously discussed, and it is clear even after that, Rapture would need a long time to heal. The implementation of Ayn Rand's ideas has damaged society so thoroughly that it is no longer possible to save within the short term, even if you could do everything right. As a final note, Jack continues the tradition of Rapture being the one that destroys Rapture. After all, it is revealed that he is also no foreigner, he was actually made possible by the existence of Rapture. All the things that destroyed Rapture are things that Rapture itself created.

So, what is the conclusion then? That BioShock is a great game and piece of political commentary, and Ayn Rand is not-so-great a philosopher and political theorist? To a point, yes. But there is a further commentary to be made, meta-commentary that is. BioShock is a masterpiece, there is almost universal agreement on this point. But I argue that BioShock does something that not all games can do, not all masterpiece-level games can do. In fact, it is almost unique in this. BioShock takes an accepted, if often criticized, figure from political philosophy, and thoroughly dissects and disproves their ideas by giving the consumer a sense of real experience within a society of those very ideals. It is easy for any art form to give accepted political messages. Even a simple design on a napkin package can say that racism is bad. So, when a video game simply says racism is bad, it does not make a point about all video games as an art form in general. (Although the cries of Capital G Gamers whenever a game does so, does make a point about those people, namely that they are racist man-children living in a bubble of delusions.) Yet, when BioShock does what it does to Randian Objectivism, there is a point to be made for gaming as a whole.

Namely, we can now argue that a video game is just as valid as a book, fiction or nonfiction, or a movie in refuting a credible argument, or a credible thinker (which Ayn Rand is treated as), and that the arguments presented through the format of a video game are not invalid simply because they are presented in a video game format. Now, there are two things that BioShock does that make it unique in this regard. Firstly, BioShock names a name. It specifically calls out Ayn Rand by creating a stand-in character in Andrew Ryan (whose name without the "rew" is an anagram of Rand's). Video games have made great political commentaries before BioShock, there is no need to prove that they can do that. This would be an inarguable point to any person above thirteen years of age who has played Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, which predates BioShock by 6 years and makes just as great political commentary as BioShock. Yet, when you refute the claims and arguments of a real political after giving their name, you are in the most dangerous zone of political debate where every bit of logic and data is now up for use against you, yet BioShock

has met universal acclaim in the political commentary department as well. As things stand, it is THE video game that proves that games are indeed as valid as any old-school way of philosophizing.

The second point is one I actually made while describing the first. BioShock presents its point as a video game, not in a video game. The difference might not be obvious, but imagine this: You are playing a video game and you must read a text to proceed. The text is a copy of the Unabomber Manifesto. Now, there is obviously a political statement in the game, but it is definitely not presented as a game. It does not use the unique qualities of the medium to make a point and thus does not prove a general point about the medium itself. As an example of the way BioShock does this, let me remind you of when I argued that BioShock had a good balance of direct and indirect storytelling. I mentioned that the game gives you just enough when you simply complete the required parts, but rewards you appropriately when you take the time to indulge in optional material. This is undoubtedly a way in which it delivers its political message because it creates the sense that you are exploring a fallen city yourself and finding its faults, rather than those faults being spoon-fed to you. If BioShock were, say, a book or a movie, this would not have been possible. Indeed, there are no optional lines in a book, and no optional frames in a movie, the possibility of the construction of the message in this manner is a unique property of video games. A part of the value of the message of BioShock lies in the fact that it is a video game. This is the crucial fact that allows us to make a general point on the validity of video games as arguments from the example of BioShock.

By now, I think you should be convinced that BioShock is one of the true masterpieces of gaming history. I have spent a lot of time arguing for that, especially concerning its narrative. Yet, there is one thing that will “make or break” my argument, if you will. If you do not believe that Andrew Ryan is an appropriate stand-in for Ayn Rand, or that Rapture is not a proper Randian utopia, or that the events in the game are distorted out of realism to perhaps push an agenda, all my arguments about the narrative will fail. All those arguments simply assumed that the game provided an approximation close enough to reality that we could make political claims off of the material presented in it. Logically, if you are trying to conclude some things about the real world from a game, the game should very closely follow the facts and logic of our own reality. Now, I do think that I have done a good job of presenting and retelling the overarching narrative of the game, and I think that the game itself is an approximation close enough to reality to draw actual political and philosophical conclusions from. In that case, you might already be convinced that my arguments on the narrative are justified from a logical standpoint, or perhaps I could convince you with just a few more arguments. Yet, if I tried to do that, would that not be hypocrisy? I have written it with my own metaphorical pen, have I not? Indeed, “A part of the value of the message of BioShock lies in the fact that it is a video game.”! I could argue that BioShock does a good enough job of emulating life that we should listen to its messages, but it would be better for both of us if you simply played the game and immersed yourself in the world, assuming you have not done so already. So, if you have read up to this point, and you have not yet played BioShock, consider giving it a try, would you kindly?

