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An Introduction to the Study of Ayn Rand

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“Ayn Rand ... is among the most outspoken – and important – intellectual voices in America today,” wrote *Playboy Magazine* in 1964. “She is the author of what is perhaps the most fiercely damned and admired best seller of the decade, *Atlas Shrugged*.” The magazine goes on to describe the novel’s impressive sales (“more than 1,200,000 copies since its publication six years ago”), the discussion groups and debate it spawned on college campuses, and the thousands of people who subscribed to Rand’s *Objectivist Newsletter* or attended lecture courses on her philosophy.

That any novel should set off such a chain reaction is unusual; that *Atlas Shrugged* has done so is astonishing. For the book, a panoramic novel about what happens when the “men of the mind” go on strike, is 1,168 pages long. It is filled with lengthy, sometimes complex philosophical passages; and it is brimming with as many explosively unpopular ideas as Ayn Rand herself. Despite this success, the literary establishment considers her an outsider. Almost to a man, critics have either ignored or denounced the book. She is an exile among philosophers, too, although *Atlas* is as much a work of philosophy as it is a novel. Liberals glower at the very mention of her name; but conservatives, too, swallow hard when she begins to speak. For Ayn Rand, whether anyone likes it or not, is *sui generis*: indubitably, irrevocably, intransigently individual. (*Playboy Interview* 35)

Over 50 years later, and 33 years after her death, Rand remains one of the most important intellectual voices in our culture. In the last six years alone (2009 through 2014) *Atlas* has sold 2.25 million copies – one million more than in the six years immediately after its publication. In total, more than 30 million copies of Rand’s books have been sold.¹ Her ideas are as radical today as they were during her lifetime. And there remains a pronounced disconnect between the inspiration (both esthetic and intellectual) that so many readers take from her books and the dismissive or scornful response that these same books still often meet in academia.

In the political arena, liberals still despise and mock her, as do many leaders of the Christian right, neo-conservative, and libertarian movements. Yet Rand’s influence is always evident wherever one finds morally self-confident opposition to regulation, taxes, or entitlements, and wherever one sees celebrations of business and the free market. Thus, sales of Rand’s books

soared to record levels in 2008 and 2009 as Americans struggled to make sense of the financial crisis, and slogans referencing John Galt (the hero of *Atlas*) were ubiquitous at the early “Tea Party” protests against the interventionist measures by which the Bush and Obama administrations responded to the crisis. Rand has been frequently referenced in American political discourse since, both by those who cite her as an inspiration and by commentators who attribute many of the nation’s ills to Rand’s influence.² But references to Rand, on both sides, are usually superficial. They are attempts to evoke or to smear – but not to engage with – that strand in the American consciousness which resonates to Rand’s distinctive vision of what a human life can and should be.

She described this vision as “the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute” (*Atlas* 1070).³ Rand viewed “man” as a “heroic being” in the sense that she thought that human nature sets a demanding ideal that each individual can and should achieve in his own life and character (though few people do achieve it). This ideal is the fit object of the emotion of reverence, and Rand sometimes speaks of “worshipping” it or the people (real or fictional) who embody it. This ideal – the life proper to a human being – is egoistic in the sense that an individual leading such a life is dedicated as a matter of moral principle to his own happiness. Happiness, for Rand, is not mere pleasure or desire-satisfaction. It is that state of “non-contradictory joy” (*Atlas* 1022) that is the concomitant of achieving what one has rationally identified as objectively good. A heroic human being is committed to the fullest use of his reason; and he uses it to conceive ambitious, life-sustaining goals, and to achieve them via productive activity. All the aspects of this vision and Rand’s arguments for them are discussed in detail in later chapters. So are other aspects of her thought, including the view that, because such a life requires the political freedom to live by one’s own judgment, laissez-faire capitalism is the only moral social system. It is enough for now to note that this vision evokes intense reactions in many people: some are inspired; others, revolted; some find it profound; others, juvenile.

Rand used the phrase “sense of life” to designate the aspect of a person’s or a culture’s psychology that generates the differing emotional reactions we have to artworks and (especially) to the view of the world and of humanity that they project. A sense of life is an implicit worldview – a “pre-conceptual metaphysics” that is experienced as a “constant, basic emotion” and expressed in a person’s “widest goals or smallest gestures” (“Philosophy and Sense of Life” *RM* 8, 18, 22).⁴ Part of maturing, Rand held, is translating one’s sense of life into conscious convictions, which one can rationally evaluate; correct, if necessary; and then consistently implement. Adopting this terminology, then, we can say that, for better or for worse, Rand’s vision holds a deep and enduring appeal for something in “the American sense of life” – or, at least, for a sense of life that is shared by many Americans and that contributes to the character of the nation. If so, then engagement with her works and thought is a crucial means by which scholars can help America to understand itself, and by which they can help the many people, in every country, who find Rand inspiring or repugnant to understand one another.⁵

Taking Rand Seriously

The scholarly study of Rand’s works was postponed by two generations of academics who found her vision appalling and thought or hoped that she was a passing fad, and that their students’ attraction to her was a youthful indiscretion. These hopes have been dashed. Decades after her

death, Rand's appeal and influence cannot be denied; and very often something of her heroic vision of man remains even in the souls of readers who "outgrow" her and resign themselves (sadly or smugly) to a world in which they believe the kind of life she projects is impossible or vicious.

Happily, these facts are beginning to be recognized. Rand's novels have, perhaps grudgingly, been admitted to the literary canon. They are seldom discussed in journals, but one increasingly finds *Anthem* and *The Fountainhead* taught in high school English courses or listed on summer reading lists, and *Atlas Shrugged* has begun to appear in university syllabi. Objectivism, as Rand called her philosophical system, may still be regarded as a curiosity by most philosophy professors, but her defense of egoism is now often covered in ethics textbooks, excerpts from her essays are widely anthologized, and there are entries on Rand in the two major encyclopedias of philosophy.⁶ Moreover, there is a small but growing number of scholars and advocates of Objectivism within the philosophy departments of America's colleges and universities.⁷

Indeed, the last decade saw a boom in quality Rand scholarship. Among the highlights are Tara Smith's (2006) *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics*, Robert Mayhew's (2004, 2005a, 2007, 2009, 2012a) edited collections of essays on each of Rand's novels, and the first two volumes of the Ayn Rand Society's *Philosophical Studies* series: *Metaethics, Egoism, and Virtue* (2011) and *Concepts and Their Role in Knowledge* (2013), both edited by Allan Gotthelf and James Lennox. Since its founding in 1987, the Society (of which I am co-secretary) holds sessions on Rand's ideas at meetings of the American Philosophical Association. There have been 30 such meetings, collectively involving 48 panelists who represent 41 academic departments from institutions on three continents.⁸ Some of these panelists are advocates for Objectivism; many are not; but all are participating in the stimulating exchange of ideas that occurs whenever philosophers take Rand's works seriously.

Turning from scholarly to popular books, two biographies of Rand were published in 2009, by Jennifer Burns and Anne C. Heller. Burns's book, especially, is less informative than one might hope about Rand's ideas and intellectual development; and both authors, in what seem to be attempts to create what they regard as a satisfying narrative about Rand's later life, emphasize the painful episodes and underplay the bright points; but each biography is a significant improvement over any previously available book-length treatment of Rand's life.⁹ There is also Gary Weiss's (2012) *Ayn Rand Nation*, which, though not very deep and rife with inaccuracies, clearly recognizes the need for sustained reflection by leftists about the nature of Rand's ideas and the source of their appeal.¹⁰ Weiss is trying to combat Rand's influence, but there have also been several recent books put out by major publishing houses that expound some of Rand's ideas sympathetically for a popular audience: Donald Luskin and Andrew Greta's (2011) *I Am John Galt: Today's Heroic Innovators Building the World and the Villainous Parasites Destroying It*, Yaron Brook and Don Watkins's (2012) *Free Market Revolution: How Ayn Rand's Ideas Can End Big Government*, and Peter Schwartz's (2015) *In Defense of Selfishness: Why the Code of Sacrifice Is Unjust and Destructive*.

There are other books that could be named as well, but this list is sufficient to illustrate a growing recognition – both within academia and without, in several disciplines, and across the ideological spectrum – that Ayn Rand should be taken seriously.

To take an author seriously means to read her, not with an eye toward confirming one's prejudices (whether favorable or unfavorable), but simply with an eye to understanding what she thinks and why. If one finds her approach unfamiliar and difficult, it means working to overcome that. If one finds what she says implausible or unmotivated, it means taking the time

to consider why it seems otherwise to her and to the readers who find her convincing – and it means giving thought to the question of whether it is you or she who is mistaken. By the same token, if she strikes you as obviously correct with respect to an issue where you know many people find her views counterintuitive, it means working to identify the premises that you share with her and not with them, and then figuring out how to determine whether those premises are true.

This approach is especially important in the case of Rand, because she is (as *Playboy* put it) “brimming” with “explosively unpopular ideas.” In particular, she maintained that our society is unjust in deep and pervasive ways, and that at the heart of this corruption are the moral ideals by which we are taught to live our lives, and on which we are taught to base our self-esteem. Rand is thus a *radical* critic of society. In this respect she is analogous to other radical thinkers of various stripes – nineteenth-century abolitionists, twentieth-century Marxists, and those who inveigh against what they see as the inherent racism, sexism, or imperialism of Western culture.

As with many such thinkers, Rand’s writing often has a confrontational character. For example, she explains, in the introduction to *The Virtue of Selfishness*, that she gave the work the title she did “For the reason that makes you afraid of it” (VOS vii). The title is frightening. It challenges our fundamental moral beliefs – beliefs that are central to all of our goals, to our sense of self-esteem. It takes courage and a commitment to introspective honesty to consider challenges to such beliefs. When one’s sense of self-worth is threatened, there is always a temptation to seize upon any convenient rationalization for rejecting the challenge (and the challenger) rather than taking the time, and putting forth the effort, required to understand and evaluate it. On the other hand, if one feels alienated from or unappreciated by one’s fellow human beings, a radical criticism of one’s society can serve as a rationalization for these feelings and a weapon with which one can lash out against others. Whether one finds Rand appealing or repugnant, the sorts of issues that she raises are fraught with temptations for intellectual dishonesty, and one will find no shortage of facile reasons to dismiss or embrace her ideas too quickly.

Readers who resist these temptations, and approach Rand seriously, will, I think, find her to be a powerfully unconventional artist and a philosopher of great breadth and subtlety. They may also come to see her, as I do, as the discoverer of some profound and empowering truths. But it is not my aim here to argue for this evaluation of Rand, nor is that the purpose of any of the chapters in this book. All of the contributing authors are professional intellectuals who have made mastering Rand’s works and philosophy a significant part of their careers, despite working in fields where she is too seldom taken seriously and where a perceived interest in her can be a professional liability. It stands to reason that we would all be great admirers of her, and two of us (Allan Gotthelf and Harry Binswanger) counted her as a mentor and a personal friend. In other contexts, many of us have written as defenders of her philosophy, but our purpose throughout this book is to serve, not as advocates, but as guides. This is something that Allan Gotthelf and I, in our capacity as editors, stressed throughout the editorial process, from our initial invitations to the contributors, to our (often extensive) feedback on drafts.

The consistent aim of the book is to facilitate the study of Rand’s works and thought by identifying Rand’s key theses and methods and her reasons for them, by tracing the role that these theses and methods play in her thought, by showing the evidence in her texts for all of our interpretive conclusions, and by drawing illuminating comparisons between Rand and other thinkers. Of course, there are many occasions when the contributing authors (myself included) have found that this end is best served by raising and/or responding to objections to Rand’s positions, but such arguments are presented here only as means to clarification. We hope that

the book will be useful to critics and admirers of Rand alike, and that it will thereby help to increase the intellectual sophistication and scholarly rigor of the discourse about her both within the academy and in the culture at large.

Some Challenging Features of Rand's Ideas and Writings

Reading Rand seriously, as opposed to merely reacting passively to her writings, is demanding intellectual work. This is true to some extent of all authors, but there are several features of Rand's corpus and of her position in the culture that make it particularly difficult in her case.

Scholars and students of philosophy trained in analytic departments (as were most of the contributors to this volume) may find that Rand's philosophical essays read as though they come from an alien tradition. She addresses recognizable philosophical issues, but they are framed differently; the context and values she assumes are unfamiliar, as are her methods of argument and analysis. In all these respects, reading Rand is like reading a figure from a different philosophical school (or a different period in the history of philosophy). However, she is not only an outsider to the specific tradition of analytic philosophy; she is (as *Playboy* put it) *sui generis*. Rather than working within an established school of thought, Rand's essays are addressed either to a general audience or (more often) to the audience that she herself created. Most of her non-fiction was written for her own periodicals, and it sometimes presumes familiarity with her novels and with the ideas expounded in earlier issues.

When Rand does engage with the intellectual traditions of her time, she does so as an outsider – often a hostile one. In this respect, she is like such early modern intellectuals as Bacon, Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza. The comparison I am making is not to the intellectual stature of these thinkers, but to their relation to the intellectual establishment of their day. When they wrote, the universities were dominated by Scholasticism, an entrenched intellectual tradition with an established vocabulary, shared assumptions, an institutional structure, conventions of discourse, and a credentialing method. Rather than developing and presenting their ideas within this structure, the early modern intellectuals struck out on their own. They found their own audience and often explained their ideas in ways that made little reference to the establishment. When they did discuss Scholasticism it was in broadsides that the scholastics must have thought missed the nuances of their arguments and trivialized the differences between their positions (e.g., the differences between Scotists and Thomists). Likewise, Rand's often contemptuous remarks about the academic philosophy of the mid-twentieth century did not win her many friends in the philosophy departments of the time. However, 50 years later, most academic philosophers do not have much more regard for the positions Rand dismissed (e.g., logical positivism and flagrant subjectivism about ethical principles) than she did in the 1960s.¹¹

The philosophers with reference to whom Rand situates herself are not her contemporaries in the academy, but world historical figures – chiefly, Plato, Aristotle, and Kant. And, rather than engaging in minute scholarship of these thinkers, she speaks of them as they most often spoke of one another – in essentialized sketches. (See James Lennox's discussion of Rand's take on the history of philosophy, Chapter 13, below.)

Like these world historical philosophers, Rand aimed to be *systematic*. Objectivism (as she called her philosophy) comprises five branches: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political theory, and esthetics. It also includes theses that we might describe as belonging to philosophical psychology, the philosophy of economics, and the philosophy of history. In many essays, Rand

used this system as a framework within which to interpret the events of her time, and to recommend courses of political action and cultural activism.

There is a definite hierarchical structure to her thinking. At the base of this system is the metaphysical conviction that Rand called “The Primacy of Existence” – the thesis “that the universe exists independent of consciousness (of *any* consciousness), that things are what they are, that they possess a specific nature, an *identity*. The epistemological corollary is the axiom that consciousness is the faculty of perceiving that which exists” (“The Metaphysical Versus the Man-Made” *PWNI* 32). (See Jason Rheins’s discussion in Chapter 11, below.) The distinctively human form of consciousness is reason, which enables us to understand the world and to guide our actions by means of a system of concepts that are formed, ultimately, on the basis of sense-perception. Unlike sense-perception, which Rand regarded as a direct, inerrant, and automatic awareness of external objects, reason is volitional and (consequently) fallible. Because of this, human beings need epistemology, the “science devoted to the discovery of the proper methods of acquiring and validating knowledge” (*ITOE* 36). The centerpiece of Rand’s epistemology is her theory of concept-formation. In Chapter 12, I examine this theory, and explain the role that Rand thought her theory (and epistemology as a whole) played in enabling human beings to achieve objectivity in their thinking. This thinking includes, importantly, the reasoning by which we validate moral principles and by which each of us conceives and pursues personal values. Thus Rand’s ethics rests on her epistemology and metaphysics.

In ethics, Rand articulates the essential values that constitute “man’s life” (the moral ideal we discussed earlier); she argues that these values are based in the requirements of human survival, and she shows how they form a standard by reference to which an individual can form and pursue rational goals. These issues are the subjects of the chapters that make up Part II of this volume. Part III concerns her social theory – especially her endorsement of capitalism as the ideal social system. I indicated earlier how this endorsement follows from her ethics.

In esthetics, Rand’s aim is to identify the essence of art and the human need that it serves. Doing so makes possible objective standards by which art can be evaluated. The function of art, she maintains, is to enable a human being to experience concretely his (or another’s) sense of life. Rand explores the epistemological function of a sense of life, and its nature as a psychological phenomenon. A sense of life is a body of implicit metaphysical convictions, and Rand defines the school of art to which she belongs by identifying its core metaphysical conviction: “Romanticism is a category of art based on the recognition of the principle that man possesses the faculty of volition” (“What Is Romanticism?” *RM* 91).

Rand is a systematic philosopher in the sense that her thinking has a self-conscious, wide-ranging, and complex logical structure; but she did not present her philosophy systematically. There are theoretical essays on foundational issues in different branches of philosophy, but no architectonic presentation of the whole, and key concepts or theses are sometimes introduced in unexpected places. For example, it is in an essay on capitalism that Rand first expresses her view that there are three broad theories of the relationship between human consciousness and existence (“What Is Capitalism?” *CUI* 13–16; for discussion, see below 67–68, 228–232, 290–292, 446–447). This tendency to discuss fundamental philosophical issues as they arise in the course of addressing other subjects is fairly common among systematic thinkers, and it is part of why many of us find such thinkers – and Rand, in particular – so stimulating. What may seem at first to be a delimited treatment of some discrete phenomenon, suddenly opens up into a discussion of a fundamental question bearing on all of human life; one is exposed to new possibilities and new ways of thinking; and, perhaps most importantly, one becomes attuned to

the many, often non-obvious ways in which philosophy bears on one's life, and one learns to dig deeper and to cast a wider net in one's own thinking. Nonetheless, this feature of Rand's writing poses challenges to students and scholars, especially when first approaching her corpus.

Rand did speak sometimes of her intention to write "a detailed, systematic, presentation in a philosophical treatise" (*FTNI* vii), but she never did so. After her death, her student Leonard Peikoff did write such a treatise – *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand (OPAR)* – based upon a lecture course he delivered that Rand endorsed as "the only *authorized* presentation of the entire theoretical structure of Objectivism, i.e., the only one that I know of my own knowledge to be fully accurate" ("A Last Survey" *ARL* 4(3) 387). Because of its origins in this course, and because of Peikoff's close intellectual relationship with Rand over the course of 30 years, *OPAR* can be seen as a quasi-primary source for Objectivism – a sort of extension or supplement to Rand's corpus. It is not an exercise in exegesis of Rand's own writings (though it does often refer to them), but a presentation of her philosophic system as Peikoff learned it from Rand. *OPAR* is an impressive work of philosophy in its own right, and an invaluable aid to interpreting Rand. You will find it referenced very frequently in the chapters below.

Rand's own most comprehensive presentation of Objectivism can be found in her last novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. The novel contains several speeches, which can be read as philosophical essays in their own right, and which were reprinted (along with excerpts from her other novels) in her first non-fiction book, *For the New Intellectual (FTNI)*. Of these speeches, the largest is Galt's radio address (*Atlas* 1009–1068). It covers a startling range of topics from all the fields of philosophy, and Rand's introduction to it in *FTNI* reads simply "This is the philosophy of Objectivism" (130). You will find many quotations from this speech in the chapters that follow.¹²

Though the speeches from Rand's novels can be read as philosophical essays, they are best read in the context of the novels, as summations of ideas that have been demonstrated by the prior events through which the characters have lived. Each novel is a work of philosophy, not only or primarily because it contains philosophical speeches, but in the very construction of the plot. In each novel, philosophical premises figure into the characters' motivations, and the central conflict is resolved when reflecting on earlier events leads one or more of the characters to correct a mistaken premise or grasp a new principle.¹³ One can think of the novels as, in effect, elaborate thought experiments, the results of which are summarized by the speeches.

We find a complex, iterative version of this construction in *Atlas Shrugged*. As the story progresses, certain of the protagonists (and, with them, observant readers) identify in increasingly abstract terms the events of the story, their own motives, and the motives of the other characters. At each stage in this process, the identifications become deeper, and this enables the protagonists to understand more fully and on a larger scale what is happening in their world and what causal role they themselves are playing. This new understanding enables them to act in new ways that lead (among other things) to new discoveries and deeper understanding. Galt's speech occurs at the culmination of this process.

Philosophical engagement with Rand's novels as works of literature is intellectually rewarding in its own right and is a vital means to understanding her philosophy. The novels are, therefore, frequently discussed in many of the chapters that make up this volume.

Though Rand's novels are works of philosophy in the sense I have been discussing, she did not intend them as pedagogical devices. They are intended, rather, as art – as the profound esthetic experiences that so many readers have found them to be. Rand was emphatic on this point – see "The Goal of My Writing" (*RM* 163). But the philosophical sophistication of her characterization and plots poses a challenge to readers interested in studying her novels as

works of literature. It is not the only challenge. I have met many people to whom Rand's novels are a guilty pleasure – guilty, because, although they respond to them esthetically, they think that they are poorly written. Often they think this (usually without conviction) because they are judging the novels by parochial and inapplicable standards – for example, whether the dialogue is realistic (as though anyone actually spoke in iambic pentameter, like Hamlet, or in incisive witticisms, like Algernon Moncrieff). It is not always obvious which standards are applicable when judging a piece of literature, nor how to understand our own responses to it. It can help to know something about an author's literary aims and methods – especially when they are outside of the contemporary mainstream. On this issue, I direct readers to Tore Boeckmann's Chapter 17 on Romanticism, the literary school with which Rand identified.

Historians, political scientists, and other readers interested in Rand's analyses of the concrete political and cultural events of her time, will also need to contend with her positions on a wide range of philosophical issues and with the historical narrative in light of which she interpreted contemporary events. Since a person's actions are caused primarily by his ideas, Rand reasoned, so too a culture's thinking – its philosophy – is the dominant cause of its history. Thus the principal actors in Rand's historical narrative are philosophers. She held that, over the course of generations, the ideas of a period's prominent philosophers diffuse out through cultural products and institutions, eventually shaping the public's daily life and sense of life.

Rand saw many of the developments of the fourteenth through nineteenth centuries as the results of the Aristotelianism that had come into the mainstream of European thought through the work of Thomas Aquinas. Though Aristotle's philosophy was "far from perfect" (*Papers* 031_04x_005_001/*Journals* 692), Rand thought it contained the essentials of a rational metaphysics and epistemology: the world we perceive is real and populated by entities with determinate natures that we can come to understand by means of a rational process that begins with sense perception and culminates in a systematic knowledge in universal and essentialized terms.¹⁴ The Aristotelian emphasis on observation, logical rigor, and causal explanation made possible the Renaissance in art and the scientific revolution. A growing respect for reason and an appreciation of life on earth led people to value the freedom that reason and the pursuit of happiness require. In the seventeenth century, John Locke identified the rights that (in Rand's terms) "define and sanction" this freedom; and, in the eighteenth century, these rights were implemented in the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution. There were important contradictions in the American form of government – worst of all, the toleration of slavery in the South – but America's distinguishing feature was an explicit (if compromised) commitment to rights. The resulting social system, capitalism, made it possible for the businessmen of the nineteenth century to use the growing scientific knowledge in new and innovative ways to "fill men's physical needs and expand the comfort of men's existence" (*FTNI* 27).

The creative energy, the abundance, the wealth, the rising standard of living for *every* level of the population were such that the nineteenth century looks like a fiction-Utopia, like a blinding burst of sunlight in the drab progression of most of human history. If life on earth is one's standard of value, then the nineteenth century moved mankind forward more than all the other centuries combined. ("Faith and Force" *PWNI* 89)

Thus Rand thought that the period held forth the promise of a future ideal society – one that would implement the principle of individual rights fully and consistently. But this ideal was not to come.

While the practical consequences of Aristotelianism were reaching men's daily existence, its theoretical influence was long since gone: philosophy, since the Renaissance, had been retrogressing overwhelmingly to the mysticism of Plato. Thus the historically unprecedented events of the nineteenth century – the Industrial Revolution, the child-prodigy speed in the growth of science, the skyrocketing standard of living, the liberated torrent of human energy – were left without intellectual direction or evaluation. The nineteenth century was guided, not by an Aristotelian philosophy, but by *an Aristotelian sense of life*. (And, like a brilliantly violent adolescent who fails to translate his sense of life into conscious terms, it burned itself out, choked by the blind confusions of its own overpowering energy.) (“What Is Romanticism?” RM 95)

Rand thought that all of the prominent philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contributed (in most cases, unwittingly) to this retrogression into mysticism, but she identified the key figure as Immanuel Kant. As Rand understood it, Kant's philosophy is an attack on all the essentials of a rational way of life; his epistemology undercuts human beings' confidence in reason, and his ethics pits morality against self-interest. She regarded all of the prominent philosophies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as minor variations on Kant's, and she thought this pervasive Kantianism stunted the newly formed sciences of esthetics and economics, thereby preventing some of the achievements of the nineteenth century from being properly identified or defended. The nineteenth century's great esthetic achievement, Romantic art, was supplanted first by Naturalism and then by increasingly unintelligible and ugly modern art. Capitalism also gave way in the twentieth century, and much of Europe descended into dictatorship. The descent was slower in America, which had a more deeply Aristotelian sense of life, but Rand saw signs that the country was moving in the same direction. Objectivism is the philosophy she thought was needed to reverse this trend: a more consistent Aristotelianism that exposes the fallacies of Kantianism and provides the guidance needed to achieve the future promised by the nineteenth century.

Rand's view of and relation to Aristotle, Kant, and other historical philosophers is discussed in many of the chapters below, in connection with her positions on various philosophical issues (see the entries for these thinkers in the index). Chapter 13 by James Lennox is an overview of her take on the history of philosophy and its influence; and, in Chapter 15, John Lewis and I discuss the use Rand made of this historical perspective in interpreting the events and trends of her own time.

We have discussed some of the reasons for studying Rand, some of the challenges involved, and some of the ways in which the chapters of this book will address those challenges. I would like to discuss now a few features of Rand's corpus and her life that should be borne in mind when studying her.

Rand's Works and Related Sources

The Fountainhead, published in 1943, is the book that made Rand's reputation as a novelist. Prior to it, she had published one other novel, *We the Living* (in 1936) and a novella, *Anthem* (in 1938). She had also written a successful Broadway play, *Night of January 16th* (which premiered in 1935), and a number of plays and short stories that would not be performed or published until later in her life or, in some cases, after her death.

Rand seems to have regarded *The Fountainhead* as her first mature work of fiction. She later wrote that, in the period prior to *The Fountainhead*, she sometimes “felt that my means were

inadequate to my purpose, and that I had not said what I wanted to say as well as I wished” (WTL ix). Accordingly, she produced revised versions of *Anthem* (in 1946) and *We the Living* (in 1959). (A detailed account of these revisions can be found in Mayhew 2012b and 2005b.) By contrast, in later editions of *The Fountainhead*, she “left the text untouched” because “I want it to stand as written” – this despite the fact that she thought there was a minor semantic error in the novel and one misleading statement, both of which she explained in her introduction to the 25th anniversary edition (*Fountainhead* x–xi).

If *The Fountainhead* marks Rand’s maturity as a novelist, it is *Atlas Shrugged*, published in 1957, that marks her maturity as a philosopher. In her afterword to the novel, she wrote that she has “held the same philosophy I now hold, for as far back as I can remember” and that, though she “learned a great deal through the years and expanded my knowledge of details, of specific issues, of definitions, of applications,” she “never had to change any of my fundamentals” (*Atlas* 1070). This is the same afterword in which she writes that her philosophy is “in essence, the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.” Indeed nascent forms of all the ideas she names in that quote are prominent in the posthumously published notes and short stories from the 1920s that are her earliest surviving writings in English (*Early* 3–146, *Journals* 4–48). What we do not find in these early materials – or even in *The Fountainhead* – is the philosophical system whose outline I sketched above. Much of the content of her ethics is explicit from the beginning (though formulations and emphases change), but it is only in the period between *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* that she worked out her view of reason and of volition (or “free will”), and these ideas enabled her to integrate her thoughts into a system and remove some important ambiguities.¹⁵

In particular, the idea that reason is a volitional faculty led her to the conviction that an individual’s values and moral character derive from his choices – fundamentally, from the choice between engaging one’s reason in order to grasp reality and subverting one’s consciousness in order to indulge a contradiction. In Rand’s mature system, the fundamental virtue is rationality, and it consists in choosing the first of these alternatives – in volitionally recognizing the primacy of existence. In *The Fountainhead*, she had treated independence as the primary virtue; and it is left ambiguous in much of her work prior to *Atlas* whether all of the morally significant differences she sees among people are matters of choice. The centrality of reason and volition to Rand’s system explains her choice to name it “Objectivism”; for to be “objective” is (as Peikoff aptly formulates Rand’s view) “volitionally to adhere to reality by following certain rules of method, a method based on facts *and* appropriate to man’s form of cognition” (*OPAR* 117).

Most of Rand’s significant philosophical ideas are explicit in *Atlas* (though not always in the same terminology in which Rand would later express them in her non-fiction). Of those that are not present, the most significant is Rand’s theory of concepts, which did not appear in print until 1966, but the core of this theory was formed in the years between *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas*, when she was systematizing her thought.¹⁶ After *Atlas*, the system was essentially complete, and such ideas as she added (e.g., probably, some of her esthetic theories, the concepts of certain fallacies, and some of her classifications of philosophical theories) took their place within an existing structure.

Atlas was Rand’s last novel. Her later work is all non-fiction, most of it talks or essays. In these later works, she elaborates on her philosophical system and uses it as a framework from which to comment on contemporary events. These works are also informed by the historical narrative discussed earlier, which seems to have been formulated while she was writing *Atlas*,

or very shortly thereafter. It is clearly in evidence in some of her speeches and essays from the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁷

I indicated earlier that most of Rand's non-fiction first appeared in publications she edited, which were addressed to the audience she had created by her novels. These periodicals also contained articles by some of Rand's students and associates, and she included some such pieces in her books. She endorsed all the articles published in her periodicals as expressions of Objectivism; thus they provide definitive evidence of her positions. The same is true for certain other works, all of which are listed in section I of the "Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Quasi-Primary Sources" at the end of this volume.

Among Rand's students whose works she endorsed, two warrant special mention. Nathaniel Branden was the coeditor with Rand of *The Objectivist Newsletter* (TON) and then (until May, 1968) *The Objectivist* (TO). He was also the president of the Nathaniel Branden Institute (NBI), an organization endorsed by Rand that put on lectures about Objectivism. Branden's articles in the periodicals and his book *Who Is Ayn Rand?* (also endorsed by Rand) are important parts of the Objectivist corpus and are referenced frequently in this volume. His *Basic Principles of Objectivism* lecture course, first given in 1958, was the first extended non-fiction treatment of Rand's philosophy available to the general public.¹⁸ Branden would later release a recorded version of this course and a book transcript of it, but the precise relation of the available material to the course Rand authorized is uncertain (see Annotated Bibliography, entry #51).

Branden and Rand had a close personal and professional relationship that came to a bitter end in 1968, when she learned that he had been deceiving and manipulating her for four years.¹⁹ Branden's subsequent public accounts of this episode are not all consistent with one another, or with the accounts by Barbara Branden (with whom Rand also broke over her role in the same events), or with Rand's private notes concerning the episode.²⁰ In the decades that followed, Nathaniel Branden gained acclaim as a popular psychologist, and he continued to periodically write or lecture on Rand and her philosophy. In my opinion, his writings pertaining to Rand after their break routinely misrepresent Rand's views and (especially) their relation to his own.²¹

The second of Rand's students who warrants special mention is Leonard Peikoff. We discussed him briefly earlier in connection with his 1976 course on Objectivism and his book *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*. Rand endorsed numerous lecture courses that he gave during her life, and her introduction to his first book, *The Ominous Parallels* (published shortly after her death), describes it as "the first book by an Objectivist philosopher other than myself." After Rand's death, Peikoff continued to lecture and write on a wide range of topics, always drawing on an Objectivist foundation, and he founded the Ayn Rand Institute (ARI), the largest organization devoted to promoting Rand's ideas in the world today.²² As Rand's heir and the executor of her estate, he established ARI's Ayn Rand Archives (a resource that has been invaluable in the research for this volume) and he has overseen the posthumous publication of a great deal of material by Rand, including notes, letters, marginalia, early stories, and edited transcripts of courses and workshops. (See section II of the Annotated Bibliography.)

When an author's estate first publishes material that was not written for publication or that the author did not think was finished, the material is almost always edited with an eye to making its literary or intellectual value maximally accessible, rather than with an eye to the needs of scholars, and there is never any shortage of critics to allege that the public is being misled and that the author is being distorted, exploited, or otherwise misused.²³ Rand's case is no exception.²⁴ Though there are editorial decisions in some of her posthumously published volumes

that I wish had been made differently, all these books serve their purpose well, and the material they contain richly deserves to be read. Much of it is cited in the chapters that follow. However, none of these books can be viewed as an authoritative source for Rand's views, because little of the material they contain was composed with the care she used when writing for publication, and all of it has been edited by other hands.²⁵ Our contributing authors have used this material advisedly and have consulted the original sources whenever possible. I encourage future scholars to follow the same policy, and to view these books as means to become acquainted with materials that they may need to later examine in their original forms.

Organization of the *Companion*

As with most reference works, the chapters in this volume are written so that they can be read independently, with none presupposing any other. However, my coeditor and I have made the authors aware of material in other chapters that bears on their topics, and we have encouraged extensive cross-referencing. It is our hope that readers will dive in to the chapter on whichever topic interests them most, and that the cross-references will help them to discover and explore the many (sometimes non-obvious) connections between the different departments of Rand's thought.

This said, we have had to put the chapters in a sequence, and we have chosen the one that we think takes the reader on the most natural path through the subject matter. As will be clear from the table of contents, the book is divided into six parts. The first, which comprises the present Chapter 1 and Shoshana Milgram's Chapter 2 on Rand's life and works, aims to provide a broad context for the study of Rand's works.

Part II deals with Rand's view of ethics and human nature. Though ethics is not the field that Rand considered fundamental, it forms the most natural entry point into the study of Rand, because the issue of values and their place in human life was never far from her thinking, and her views on this subject bear directly on everything she wrote – from her earliest notes for stories, to her novels, to her most abstract essays in metaphysics or epistemology and her analyses of political events. The part begins with Chapter 3 in which I trace central themes in Rand's thought on values as these themes develop from her early story notes to her mature theory. Chapter 4, by Allan Gotthelf, covers the core of Rand's ethics, and Chapter 5, by Onkar Ghate, discusses her view of character and related issues pertaining to moral psychology. Rand's egoism is a subordinate theme in all of these chapters; I focus on it directly in Chapter 6.

Part III concerns Rand's view of society. It opens with Chapter 7 in which Darryl Wright explores the principles on which Rand thinks that a properly human society is based, including especially the principle of individual rights. Rand held that capitalism is the only moral political system, because it is the only one that protects individual rights. This view, and Rand's political philosophy more generally, is discussed by Fred Miller and Adam Mossoff in Chapter 8. Among the topics Miller and Mossoff cover is Rand's view that the protection of rights requires a government to implement a system of objective laws governing the use of retaliatory force. In Chapter 9, Tara Smith looks in more detail at Rand's view of objective law and at her criticisms of some laws that she regarded as non-objective. The section on society closes with Chapter 10 by Onkar Ghate discussing Rand's distinctive philosophical perspective on the operations of markets and her view that economic freedom is a corollary of intellectual freedom.

Part IV concerns the two fundamental branches of Rand's philosophical system. Jason Rheins discusses her metaphysics in Chapter 11, and I cover her epistemology in Chapter 12. Both chapters emphasize the ways that these foundational aspects of Rand's thought relate to the ethical and political issues discussed in earlier chapters.

The subject of Part V is the history of philosophy and its influence on culture and history. In Chapter 13, James Lennox discusses Rand's approach to the history of philosophy and her view of the figures she considered most important. Friedrich Nietzsche is not one of those figures, but Rand read a great deal of him as a young adult, and he loomed large in her mind as she began to work out her own views in ethics. Lester Hunt discusses her evolving relationship to Nietzsche in Chapter 14. Chapter 15, by John Lewis and me, is a study of Rand's extensive writing on the events of her own time and the philosophical ideas that she identified as causes of these events.

Part VI addresses Rand's view of art, both as a theorist and as a literary artist. In Chapter 16, Harry Binswanger covers her theory of art generally. Tore Boeckmann, in Chapter 17, discusses Rand's view of Romantic literature and how this view is embodied in her own novels.

The book closes with a brief "coda" in which Allan Gotthelf and I examine two theses that Allan liked to call "hallmarks of Objectivism." One is Rand's view, discussed above, of man as a "heroic being." The other is what she called "the benevolent universe premise" – the idea that the universe is hospitable to human achievement, such that a person who lives morally can expect to live happily. We show how these two "hallmarks" follow from the more technical aspects of Rand's philosophy covered in the earlier chapters. Because the hallmarks constitute much of the sense of life projected by Rand's novels, the coda underscores the connection between this more technical material and the issues with which I began this introduction. For it is the conviction that what Rand envisions is possible and proper that evokes such strong reactions (positive and negative) in so many readers, and this is what has made Rand (to paraphrase *Playboy*) the most fiercely damned and admired author of our time.

Notes

- 1 Thank you to Richard Ralston at the Ayn Rand Institute for sharing these sales figures. The figures include all sales of English-language editions of Rand's books (including e-books and the more than 3.6 million books purchased by the Ayn Rand Institute as part of its "Free Books for Teachers" program), but the figures do not include foreign-language editions. There have been at least 100 translations of Rand's works into at least 26 languages.
- 2 Examples of this left-wing take include: Weiss 2012, Gage 2012, Krugman 2012, McMurry 2014, Levine 2014.
- 3 The word "man" as used in this formulation – and as Rand often uses it – is meant to subsume all members of the human species, regardless of their sex. Such generic uses of "man" and of masculine pronouns have fallen out of favor in recent decades on the grounds that they reinforce the view that the adult male is the paradigm case of a human being and that women are derivative or special cases (see Miller and Swift 1976, Moulton 1981, Warren 1986, and Little 1996). I doubt this would have persuaded Rand. She held that men and women are equal morally and intellectually, but she thought that regarding the adult male as the primary representative of the human species is part of healthy human sexual psychology, especially female sexual psychology. (See 395 n. 83 in this volume and the sources cited there.)

The contributors to this volume usually retain Rand's gendered language when commenting directly on passages in which she uses such language, since to do otherwise would be confusing. In other contexts, each contributor has adopted whatever policies with regard to gendered language he or she thinks best. For my part, when writing as sole author of a chapter, I refer to persons of unspecified gender by

- the pronoun of the gender opposite to that of whoever else is most discussed in the immediate context. This policy has the advantage of using the pronoun's gender as an aid to disambiguation. (Since Rand is the dominant subject of this book, this policy has most often led to the choice of masculine pronouns.)
- 4 Rand is not the first person to use this phrase. It occurs in the title of Miguel de Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life*, and a Google Books search reveals that it can be found in many nineteenth-century authors, often in discussions of religion. I do not know where Rand first encountered the phrase or whether she coined it independently of the earlier usages. She writes of a "sense of living" in notes from 1928 (*Journals* 28), enclosing the phrase in quotes. Her earliest use of "sense of life" that I know of is in an outline for *Atlas*, dated August 24, 1946 (*Papers* 158_02B_002_002/*Journals* 532), and the word "life" is enclosed in quotes (which the editor of *Journals* omitted); this indicates that she didn't yet regard the phrase as a unit. In a letter dated September 30, 1946 (*Papers* 102_21A_018_001), Frank Lloyd Wright asks Rand whether she has read Unamuno's book. She replies, in a letter dated October 10 (*Papers* 102_21A_019_002/*Letters* 117), that she has not, "but I shall get it and read it." The sentence before Wright's question about Unamuno reads "*Anthem* is very clean and clear." So likely the question was prompted by something in *Anthem* (perhaps 101–102) that reminded him of Unamuno.
 - 5 For Rand's own view of the "American sense of life" and her relation to it, see "Don't Let It Go" (*ARL* 1(4) 16). And see my and John Lewis's discussion below, 385–386. On the concept of sense of life, more generally, see Onkar Ghate's discussion, 118–123. On its role in responses to art, see Harry Binswanger, 417–418.
 - 6 Among the textbooks and anthologies that include material by or about Rand are: Rachels 1986, Feinburg and Shafer-Landau 1999, Presbey, Struhl, and Olsen 2000, Pojman 2004, Boss 2005, Lawhead 2006, Palmer 2006, Solomon 2008, Pojman and Vaughn 2012, Bowie, Michaels, and Solomon 2007, Vaughn 2012, Wilkens 2011, and Clark and Allison 2015. To my knowledge the first ethics textbook to include discussion of her views was John Hospers's (1961) *Human Conduct*; Rand and Hospers were carrying on a correspondence at the time, her side of which can be found in *Letters* 502–563. Entries on Rand in prominent philosophical reference works include the oddly inept piece by Chandran Kukathas (1998) in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (among other gross errors, he describes *The Virtue of Selfishness* as a novel), Stephen Hicks's (2006) entry in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and Badhwar and Long's (2012) entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
 - 7 Rand introduced the term "Objectivism" as a name for her philosophy in the late 1950s, "a time when my philosophy was beginning to be known and some people were starting to refer to themselves as 'Randists'"; she recognized the need for some such term, but objected to derivative uses of her name ("To the Readers of the Objectivist Forum" *TOF* 1(1) 1). More generally, Rand disapproved of coining nouns for ideologies or movements from the names of living people, because she thought it led to a focus on personalities rather than on the contents of the ideas (*Speaking* 27). But Rand did intend the term to represent her specific system of ideas rather than as a term for a more generic ideological orientation (as is the case with "existentialism" or "pragmatism"). For this reason, she always capitalized the "O" in "Objectivism." We follow Rand in this usage.
 - 8 My coeditor, Allan Gotthelf, served as secretary of the society (or, briefly, co-secretary) from 1990 until his death in 2013. My current co-secretary, James Lennox, is also a contributor to this volume, as are three of the other four current members of the society's Steering Committee.
 - 9 Burns's (2009) biography was based on her PhD dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, Department of History, 2005), and it purports to be a study of "Ayn Rand and the American Right," but I treat it as a popular biography because it contains much about Rand's personal life and comparatively little about her ideas and intellectual development. The book is particularly disappointing in its account of Rand's relation to other thinkers who are (or are perceived to be) on the "right." The chronology Burns provides of Rand's interactions with prominent conservatives of the 1940s and 1950s is useful and usually accurate (though see 391, n. 42, below). However, with only a few exceptions, she says little about the intellectual content of these interactions. Moreover, Burns ignores the bulk of what Rand wrote about politics after the 1964 presidential election. For example, she implies falsely that Rand said nothing significant about the Johnson administration (227), she does not mention Rand's discussions of the Nixon shock and Watergate, and, incredibly, she says nothing at all

about the 1972 presidential election (except as regards the activities of the Libertarian Party), even though Rand wrote extensively about this election and regarded McGovern's defeat as a significant turning point for the nation. As John Lewis and I show below (363–366, 379–380), Rand's views of these events and others form a definite narrative about the course down which America was traveling. Surely part of the story of "Ayn Rand and the American Right" is how Rand's narrative relates to that of prominent conservative and libertarian thinkers, but Burns leaves readers in the dark not just about this relation, but about the fact that there is anything to relate. She is at her best when tracing Rand's influence on several social and political movements that arose in the 1970s (see 247–278), including the budding libertarian movement. But here, too, her account is undermined by her inattention to Rand's political writings from the period. Most notably, Burns writes that the newly formed Libertarian Party, "unlike Rand," "offered a positive program for the future" (269). Perhaps this is how members of the Party interpreted the matter, but two of Rand's articles from the first six months of the Party's existence (January to June of 1972) are calls to action on behalf of specific policies that she argued were both politically achievable and necessary to reorient the country toward freedom. (For details, see 377, below.) If the Libertarians did not regard Rand as having a program for action, this reflects a substantive disagreement between them and Rand about what constitutes genuine and viable pro-liberty political action. Thus, where Burns paints a picture of a dispirited woman whose erstwhile followers have had to look elsewhere in search of leadership, the reality is that there were two conflicting views of political activism based in differing ideas. (In fact, there were more than two, since the libertarian movement was not unified in support of the Party.)

- 10 Here are some examples of inaccuracies or misleading statements: Weiss (2012, 25) writes that "*Atlas* and *Fountainhead* make it easy to love individualism and no-government capitalism." But Rand wasn't for "no-government capitalism"; she was a fierce critic of anarchism. (See, in this volume, 193–194 and 381–382). Among the ways in which Weiss says the novels do this is by showing a world in which "poverty and unemployment are a distant, alien presence. The only member of the underclass Dagny encounters [in *Atlas Shrugged*] is a railroad hobo who turns out to be an Objectivist with a lead on Galt." Presumably, Weiss is referring to Dagny's encounter with Jeff Allen (*Atlas* 656–672), though it is mysterious why he calls him an Objectivist; however, this is hardly Dagny's only encounter with someone who is desperately poor and devoid of hope. Weiss ignores her conversations with the dejected patrons of a slum diner (176–178), her visit to Starnesville and the impression its grinding poverty makes on her (283–286), her visit to Gerald Starnes's "flop house" (321–322), and her experience with the mob at Wyatt Junction before the last run on the John Galt Line (519–521). The novel contains many other descriptions of poverty. So does *The Fountainhead* and, especially, *We the Living*. These scenes may not emphasize the issues that Weiss thinks are most significant, but that is no excuse for his writing as though the scenes do not exist.

Or again, Weiss (2012, 61–63) paints it as a hypocrisy that Rand, who opposed Medicare, enrolled in the program in 1976. But, of course, whether one thinks a program should exist and how one should deal with it once it does exist are distinct issues; and, ten years prior to enrolling, Rand wrote an essay explaining why opponents of the welfare state should claim whatever benefits are due them under the programs they oppose ("The Question of Scholarships" *VOR*). Weiss ignores her stated position and quotes, *as though it were Rand's reason for enrolling in Medicare*, the opinion of an associate with whom she disagreed. The associate, Evva Pryor, worked for Rand's attorney and was authorized to handle certain financial matters for Rand, including dealing with government benefits; the two became friends, but neither their friendship nor Pryor's authorization to handle the relevant financial matters implies that Rand agreed with Pryor's reasons for thinking that Rand should accept Medicare and Social Security payments, nor does Pryor say that Rand agreed with these reasons. (The material Weiss relies on from Pryor can be found in McConnell 2010, 520–521.)

There are also many inaccuracies pertaining to the Objectivist movement. For example, Weiss (2012, 201) writes that between 1968 (when Nathaniel Branden debated Albert Ellis) and 2011 (when ARI began a series of debates with speakers from Demos) no "leading Objectivist debated anyone of stature from the political mainstream." In fact, during those years, Leonard Peikoff, Harry Binswanger, John Ridpath, and other prominent Objectivist intellectuals engaged in many

debates, and their opponents included academics, journalists, and politicians, such as Bogdan Denitch (sociology, CUNY), Christopher Hitchens (then a writer for *The Nation*), John Judis (*The New Republic*), Randall Kennedy (Harvard Law), Robert Lekachman (economics, CUNY), and Bob Rae (who became Premier of Ontario shortly after his debate with Ridpath). These opponents are, if not part of the mainstream, no further from it than are Ellis and Demos. (My information on these debates comes largely from Binswanger, but I have seen or heard recordings of several myself.) Weiss's claim serves his narrative about an odd and insular movement, but it is simply untrue.

- 11 For some of her views on the philosophers of her times, see, in the present volume 75, 254, 278, 297, 299, 304 n. 34, 331, and 397 n. 93.
- 12 On Galt's speech as a whole, including its structure and its role in the novel, see Ghate 2009b and Gotthelf 2009a.
- 13 I discuss this process in detail in the cases of *Anthem* (see Salmieri 2005) and *Atlas Shrugged* (2009b; cf. Ghate 2009a). In the case of *We the Living*, Andrei comes to grasp the evil of totalitarianism largely by witnessing its effects on Kira, the woman he loves (see Smith 2012, 364–370). In *The Fountainhead*, Roark is able to successfully defend himself at his second trial (whereas he was not able to at his first) because he has come to grasp in essential terms the difference between “creators” and “second-handers”; Dominique is ready to stand by Roark's side at the end of the novel because, through her observation of Roark's life and (especially) Wynand's, she has grasped the impotence of second-handers and the ability of creators to succeed in the world; and Wynand closes the *Banner* (which was the chief organ of the opposition to Roark) after he learns this same lesson when Roark is acquitted. (On these points, see Ghate 2007.)
- 14 See Lennox's discussion of Rand's view of Aristotle, 334–337, below. For her presentation of this historical progression, see *FTNI*. For a more detailed account, endorsed by her, of the figures in the history of philosophy discussed there, see Peikoff, *HOP1* and *HOP2*.
- 15 On these issues, see Wright 2009, and my discussion below, 63–68.
- 16 Rand said that she first formed the theory in the 1940s (*ITOE* 307), and the central idea that concepts are formed by an act of “measurement omission” is attributed to Rand in a 1952 term paper (*Papers* 020_01K_003) by her (then) friend Barbara Weidman (later, Barbara Branden).
- 17 On the relevant published works, see my and John Lewis's discussion below, 355–357. Judging by some of Rand's notes (*Papers* 47_26x), this narrative seems to have informed a number of talks she gave in 1958, but (to my knowledge) no copies of these talks survive.
- 18 It was not, however, the first course on the philosophy. Leonard Peikoff had given an informal course in 1954 that covered metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. See Sures and Sures 2001, 21–22.
- 19 Because Branden's deceptions concerned a romantic relationship he was having, and because he and Rand had also been romantically involved, Rand's anger at Branden is often trivialized as the response of a “woman scorned” (see B. Branden [1986, 356], N. Branden [1989, 404], and Levine 2014). This is a peculiarly amoral interpretation of the events. By all accounts, including Nathaniel Branden's (1989) own, he not only concealed this affair from Rand, but engaged in countless hours of discussion with her in which he deliberately misrepresented the facts of his life and the state of his psychology, all in order to maintain a professional and social relationship with Rand that he thought she would not grant him if she knew the truth. Moreover, by all accounts, Rand not only loved Branden, she (perhaps naively) believed him to be personally committed to the virtues that they both espoused – virtues that included honesty, integrity, and justice. On this basis, she promoted him as a psychologist and a teacher of her moral philosophy. In so doing, she staked much of her own reputation on his character, and she directed thousands of trusting admirers in his direction (including the woman with whom Branden carried on his affair and her husband) who then became his clients or students. What sort of person would not be incensed to discover that someone whom she had promoted in this way was capable of pervasive and sustained dishonesty? And what sort of person, having discovered this, would not feel obligated to publicly and emphatically withdraw her endorsement?
- 20 Nathaniel Branden wrote a memoir (1989) of his relationship with Rand, and Barbara Branden wrote a biography (1986) of her. The latter book is filled with psychological speculation that seems to be aimed at making sense of her own relationship with Rand. Both Brandens have discussed the circumstances of their relationship and break with Rand in several other forums. Valliant 2005

- documents the inconsistencies among the Brandens' several accounts. His book is of special value because it contains Rand's notes pertaining to her discussions with the Brandens in the period leading up to the revelation of Branden's affair. In addition to being the only contemporaneous evidence concerning the episode, these notes provide interesting insight into Rand's view of psychology and how she applied it to a very difficult situation in her personal life. However, Valliant's book is marred by his grandiose speculations about Nathaniel Branden's psychology (e.g., 382–384).
- 21 Here are a few brief examples, all from "The Benefits and Hazards of the Philosophy of Ayn Rand" (VAR). As evidence that Rand's philosophy encourages repression, he points to examples of heroic characters suppressing unpleasant emotions or feeling isolated from others, and he promotes some of his later books as offering advice on how to overcome this tendency. However, in *Atlas Shrugged*, the suppression Branden calls attention to is portrayed, not as a healthy way of functioning, but as an error that admirable people often make in difficult circumstances. The heroes who make this error are shown to suffer for it, and they learn to correct it by the end of the novel (see Salmieri 2009b on Dagny and Rearden's progression in this respect). In the same piece, he warns that too many Objectivists disown their authentic emotions in an attempt to live up to abstract moral principles that they have accepted as duties, and again he recommends books in which he advises students not to approach morality in this way. He neglects to mention that this is a problem that Rand herself had pointed out in his own psychology and that she struggled to help him with during the very conversations in which he was deceiving her (see Valliant 2005, 205–206, 299–301). In both of these (related) cases, Branden directs Rand's own (uncredited) criticisms against a straw man that he presents as her view. In other cases, he disguises the differences between Rand's view and his own. For example, though he claims to agree with Rand's view of free will, he writes that: "We are, all of us, organisms trying to survive. We are, all of us, organisms trying in our own ways to use our abilities and capacities to satisfy our needs" (VAR 549). But the essence of Rand's view of free will is that this is not the case. (See below, 64–65, 110.) Rand's villains are not trying to survive, and neither, argues Rand, is anyone in the moment of committing an immoral (as opposed to merely mistaken) action. Branden goes on to say that, when people fail to take actions conducive to their survival, it is due to mistakes. In essence, he is denying the distinction that Rand draws between errors of knowledge and moral breaches; and, given that this distinction is closely allied with the view of free will he has just contradicted, it makes sense for him to deny this as well. But it is not a clear and open statement of how he differs with Rand on a fundamental principle – nor does one find any such open statements in Branden's later writing about Rand. He gives the impression of amending something peripheral to Rand's philosophy or objecting to something idiosyncratic to her personality, when he is in fact differing in fundamentals.
 - 22 Two of our contributing authors (Harry Binswanger and Tara Smith) sit on ARI's board of directors; one (Onkar Ghate) is a senior fellow there, and many other contributors (myself included) sometimes teach or consult for ARI or otherwise participate in its programs.
 - 23 Two examples, one from the world of literature and the other from philosophy, should suffice to illustrate this phenomenon. See Trogdon 2013 on the controversies concerning the posthumous publication of novels and other materials by Ernest Hemingway. See Stern 1996 and Toynton 1997 on the editing by Ludwig Wittgenstein's trustees of material from his *Nachlass*.
 - 24 Critics of the editing of Rand's posthumously published books include Sciabarra 1998, Burns 2009, 291–293, and Campbell 2011. Their descriptions of the changes made are (in those cases where I have checked) accurate, but I disagree with their assessment of the editing, and I think that the moralistic tone taken in some of these critical pieces is a result of dropping the context of the purpose of the books, the task with which Rand entrusted Peikoff as her literary executor, and the general nature of posthumously published works. Readers who want a sense of the changes made can now compare the quotes from archival materials in this volume with the published versions of that material (which are indicated in the references). I discuss some of these posthumous books individually in section II of the Annotated Bibliography.
 - 25 *Letters of Ayn Rand* is a partial exception on both counts: Rand took great care with her correspondence, and the editing in that book is limited to omitting material that is unlikely to be of general interest.

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