



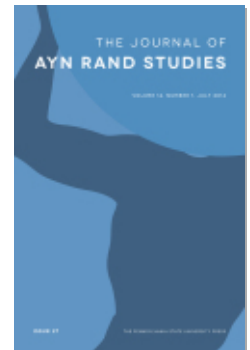
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Life, Death, Renewal

CHRIS MATTHEW SCIABARRA

ABSTRACT: This essay discusses the passing of two figures important to Ayn Rand studies: Allan Gotthelf and Barbara Branden. It also contextualizes some of the essays published in the current issue.

With this issue, the journal wishes to acknowledge the passing of two individuals who made a significant impact on the development of Ayn Rand studies: Allan Gotthelf, an Aristotelian and Randian scholar; and Barbara Branden, Ayn Rand's first authorized biographer, who later went on to write *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, until recently the only available full-length biography of Rand.

Gotthelf (Brooklyn-born, 30 December 1942) received his master's degree in mathematics from Pennsylvania State University, and his Ph.D. in philosophy from Columbia University. His doctoral dissertation, "Aristotle's Conception of Final Causality," won first prize in the Dissertation Essay Competition of *The Review of Metaphysics*, where it was published in December 1976 (vol. 30, no. 2, 226–54). Gotthelf subsequently edited a number of works in Aristotle studies, including a Festschrift in honor of David M. Balme, titled *Aristotle on Nature and Living Things: Philosophical and Historical Studies* (Mathesis, 1985), and a coedited volume with James G. Lennox, *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). A collection of sixteen essays on Aristotle by Gotthelf was published by Oxford University Press in 2012, titled

Teleology, First Principles, and Scientific Method in Aristotle's Biology, as part of the Oxford Aristotle Studies series.

Gotthelf also authored and edited a number of works on Ayn Rand. His primer on Rand for the Wadsworth Philosophers Series, *On Ayn Rand* (2000), was reviewed in these pages by Aeon Skoble (*The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 2, no. 1, Fall 2000, 131–35). He also coedited, with James G. Lennox, the first two books collecting lectures given before the Ayn Rand Society, where he served as secretary from 1990 until his death in 2013. These books, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press—*Metaethics, Egoism, and Virtue: Studies in Ayn Rand's Normative Theory* (2011) and *Concepts and Their Role in Knowledge: Reflections on Objectivist Epistemology* (2013)—are reviewed in the current issue by Fred Seddon.

For several years, Allan Gotthelf and I exchanged correspondence, both before and after the 1995 publication of the first edition of my book, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*. I acknowledged his criticisms of my work in my book—indeed, it was he who provided the precise wording with which he felt most comfortable. But when the book was finally published, he felt obliged to tell me that he would do “scholarly battle against” my work and its “obfuscation” of the ideas of Ayn Rand (correspondence, 26 May 1996).

That battle sometimes took on a bit of partisan ugliness. When our journal was first published, we worked diligently to get it included in indexing and abstracting services across disciplines and geographic boundaries. Our efforts paid off considerably; we are now indexed and abstracted by nearly two dozen services in the humanities and social sciences. But getting *JARS* into *The Philosopher's Index* was something that Allan Gotthelf opposed strongly. At a meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association in December 1999, he took exception to the very idea of including *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* in *The Philosopher's Index*. He could not outright oppose the inclusion of Rand scholarship per se in an index aimed at reaching academia, for he was a cofounder of The Ayn Rand Society, itself affiliated with the Eastern Division of the APA. But he made it very clear that, in his view, *JARS* was not a legitimate scholarly undertaking—despite the fact that several members of its founding advisory board had been officers of, and presenters to, the very society that he chaired. Nevertheless, as required, we submitted the first three issues of our journal to the Philosopher's Information Center, and *JARS* was added to the *Index* immediately thereafter.

Not enough has been said about Barbara Branden's scholarship and the importance of the early contributions she made to the articulation of the content of Objectivism and to the biography of its founder. She was born Barbara Weidman in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (14 May 1929). She and her future husband, Nathaniel Branden (born Nathan Blumenthal), met Rand in 1950. Barbara received a master's degree in philosophy from New York University,

where her thesis on free will was developed under the direction of Sidney Hook. Barbara and Nathaniel conducted a profoundly important series of biographical interviews with Rand in 1960–61 that formed the basis of Barbara's biographical essay, "Who Is Ayn Rand?" the title essay of a book coauthored with Nathaniel (Random House, 1962). It was the only authorized biography published in Ayn Rand's lifetime—one that Rand considered part of the Objectivist canon even after her bitter break with the Brandens in 1968. But those recorded interviews also served as the basis for Barbara's sprawling biography of Rand, *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (Doubleday, 1986). It was Barbara Branden who developed a comprehensive course on the "Principles of Efficient Thinking," taught during the operative years of the Nathaniel Branden Institute, which disseminated Rand's philosophy worldwide, with live and audio-recorded lectures. Barbara's course was based on Rand's epistemology. And it was Barbara Branden who first brought the field of "psycho-epistemology" to the attention of Rand.

I should mention that my own personal dealings with Barbara began, like my dealings with Gotthelf, out of the work I was doing in preparation of the first edition of *Russian Radical*. But my contact with Barbara was of an entirely different nature; what she offered me was generous amounts of unambiguously constructive criticism and, over time, the depth of her friendship and love.¹ I also worked closely with her a few years after the publication of *Russian Radical*, as she prepared the lead essay for a collection that Mimi Reisel Gladstein and I coedited, titled *Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand*, part of the Penn State Press series "Re-reading the Canon," which now includes thirty-five volumes, focusing on thinkers as diverse as Plato, Aristotle, Arendt, and Daly. It was an honor to bring her and Nathaniel together in publication for the first time since their 1962 book. Each provided a contribution to the book. "Ayn Rand: The Reluctant Feminist," by Barbara, told a tale of a woman philosopher who denounced feminism, but who nonetheless influenced a generation of thinkers in the emergence of an alternative radical individualist form of feminism, which can be found in the writings of authors such as Camille Paglia and Joan Kennedy Taylor.

It was therefore with great sadness that I learned of Barbara's passing on 11 December 2013. It is my hope that the annotated bibliography that follows, compiled by Roger E. Bissell, will, at the very least, bring to light Barbara Branden's significant contributions to the Objectivist literature, so important to the ever-expanding world of Ayn Rand studies.

It is also apropos that in the current issue we feature a symposium on Robert L. Campbell's recent *JARS* review of biographical and historical work published by Jennifer Burns, author of *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, and Anne C. Heller, author of *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*. The exchange includes replies from Burns, Mimi Gladstein, and Heller,

and a rejoinder from Campbell. Much of this discussion is enriched because of the crucial early biographical work that Barbara Branden provided for future scholars, in the extensive interviews she conducted with Rand and her contemporaries, and in the material she published in her lifetime.

NOTE

1. The book was recently published in a second edition (Sciabarra [1995] 2013), which includes an updating of the scholarship in the nearly twenty years that have passed since the first edition. Among the differences that can be found are variously edited sections throughout the book, including a new section in chapter 12 on “The Welfare-Warfare State,” relevant to a post-9/11 generation, a new preface that places the book in the context of the “Dialectics and Liberty Trilogy,” of which it is a part, and three appendices (two previously published in the pages of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* on transcripts of Rand’s college education and one entirely new essay, answering a recent critic of my historical research). Needless to say, even the second edition benefitted from various discussions I had with Barbara Branden over the past two decades.

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