



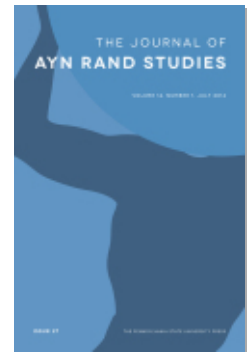
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Robert L. Campbell's essay, "An End to Over and
Against"

Jennifer Burns, Mimi Reisel Gladstein, Anne Conover Heller, Robert L.
Campbell

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SYMPOSIUM

Robert L. Campbell's essay, “An End to Over and Against”

JENNIFER BURNS, MIMI REISEL GLADSTEIN,
ANNE CONOVER HELLER, AND ROBERT L. CAMPBELL

Introduction

The following essays constitute a Symposium in response to Robert L. Campbell's essay, “An End to Over and Against,” *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 13, no. 1 (July): 46–68. We are proud to present replies from Jennifer Burns, author of *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*, Mimi Reisel Gladstein, author of numerous books and essays on Rand, and Anne Conover Heller, author of *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*. This is followed by a rejoinder from Robert L. Campbell.

Reply to Robert L. Campbell: Thoughts for the Future

JENNIFER BURNS

ABSTRACT: This essay replies to a review essay written by Robert L. Campbell, “An End to Over and Against” (*The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 13, no. 1), which discussed recent biographical and historical studies of Ayn Rand by Jennifer Burns (*Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*) and Anne C. Heller (*Ayn Rand and the World She Made*). The main point of discussion is the way in which Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden engaged the ideas and practices of modern psychology.

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It gives me great pleasure to respond to Robert Campbell's thoughtful and entertaining review (Campbell 2013) of my (Burns 2009) and Anne Heller's books (Heller 2009). *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* was reviewed in many publications, but most often by writers who had little knowledge of Rand or her legacy. Therefore it is gratifying indeed to receive such a positive assessment from someone who knows the terrain so well. On balance, I am in agreement with Campbell, even in the area where he levels the most serious criticism of my work, Rand's intersection with psychology. Let me offer a few clarifications, elaborations, and thoughts for the future.

Campbell offers two critiques of my treatment of Rand and psychology. The more pointed is that I give Rand a pass on her "therapeutic" sessions with Nathaniel Branden, and the more general is that I am unclear on the relationship of his and Rand's ideas to larger currents in twentieth-century psychological thought and practice.

Let me begin with the first point. Campbell largely applauds my critique of Branden's unprofessional and damaging style of psychotherapy, but wonders why I did not likewise criticize Rand for purporting to act as psychologist for both Barbara and Nathaniel Branden, given the extraordinary conflicts of interest and tangled sexual bonds between all three. I think Campbell is on firm territory here, and his words did give me pause. Why did I not criticize Rand for this particular action? In part, I think it is because her claim to be Barbara and Nathan's "therapist" seemed so absurd on the face of it. These sessions, which represent some of the darkest tendencies of historical Objectivism, were so far beyond the bounds of typical therapeutic interaction that I treated them more as pathological symptoms than a legitimate attempt at either healing or interpersonal conflict resolution. Rather than single out the sessions, I folded them into my larger assessment of the New York Objectivist world. Furthermore, Rand did not present herself as a professional psychologist or counselor, did not charge for these sessions, and did not offer similar services to others. In these ways, Rand's relationship with Nathaniel Branden is distinct from the relationships he developed with his paying clients and NBI students. That being said, sessions between Rand and both Brandens were deliberately and regularly scheduled, Rand at least invested a great deal of time and energy into them, and for a while they even seemed to hold the possibility of restoring the Branden marriage. Therefore, Campbell is right to point out that all of these events were "extraordinary," and ultimately worthy of a "negative judgment" (Campbell 2013, 55–56).

Let me offer a few clarifications on Campbell's second, larger point on the relationship of Rand's ideas about psychology to the broader historical context. Campbell wishes that I had specified which "teachings of modern psychology" or "accumulated wisdom of psychology" I saw in conflict with Rand and Branden's ideas. Campbell is right to glean that I had in mind here thinkers like Jung and Freud,

but I was also thinking of truths taught not just by psychology, but by the great classics of art and literature: that emotions are powerful, are often uncontrollable, and arrive unbidden from parts of the psyche we may not even know exist; that human nature is irrational and capricious; that human personality may stubbornly resist efforts to cleanse it of base desires, deep-seated conflicts, and contradictory impulses. Rand's life embodies these aspects of the human condition, but her philosophy and psychology, driven by a revolutionary desire to cast aside the past and begin the world anew, did little to grapple with this sort of psychological complexity. Instead, by attempting to rationalize away their emotions, Rand and Branden only created an ever more irrational world around them and laid the groundwork for a devastating emotional explosion.

Campbell also offers some indirect criticism of my linking Branden's later work to the "pop psychology" of the 1970s and places like the Esalen Institute. I am particularly glad that Campbell raised these points, because I think they actually point to a ripe area for future research. Although historians have written about the ideas and impulses variously called New Age or the human potential movement, there remains much to be done. And the connections are intriguing. What are the links between self-esteem and individualist philosophies like Objectivism? Why are figures like Norman Vincent Peale famous for both their positive psychology and their links to the political right? What happens to our understanding of the American past when we take seriously "pop" psychology as well as popular novelists like Rand? Is it possible to write political history using psychology, much as I used fiction in *Goddess of the Market*? In gesturing to the connections between Ayn Rand, Nathaniel Branden, and these later movements, I was trying to suggest rather than document or argue, and I'm glad to have the opportunity here to more clearly spell out some of the opportunities I see lying in wait for the next intrepid researcher. As an example, I'd cite Campbell's noting of a connection between *The Fountainhead* and Abraham Maslow, of which I was not aware (65n7). In fact, I would be thrilled if this symposium motivated one of its readers to start digging around in archives, oral histories, and overlooked bestsellers, perhaps bringing us all back again to this venue to discuss the result a few years hence.

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Reply to Robert L. Campbell: The Mainstreaming of Ayn Rand

MIMI REISEL GLADSTEIN

ABSTRACT: In her response to Robert L. Campbell's review of two recent Rand biographies ("An End to Over and Against," *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, July 2013), Gladstein adds further evidence to substantiate his claim that these two biographies, by non-Rand acolytes, are a sign that Rand is moving into the mainstream. Gladstein's analysis emphasizes Campbell's cataloging of how each biography has its own excellences and shortcomings.

When is a book review more than a book review? Robert L. Campbell's thoughtful and detailed analysis (Campbell 2013) of the two Ayn Rand biographies published in 2009, Jennifer Burns's *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* and Anne C. Heller's *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*, not only is a perceptive and helpful reading of these two works, but also addresses a number of other issues in the world of Rand criticism. His title, "An End to Over and Against," alludes to his assertion that such studies by two authors who are not adherents to Rand's philosophy is evidence that Rand's ideas have been "substantially assimilated into the wider culture" (47). His conclusion is apt, and I would add that there is further evidence of just such mainstreaming. Of significance is the inclusion of both *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* as titles in Twayne's Masterworks Studies series. Books in this series are generally accepted canonical texts and the Twayne analytical volumes are omnipresent on local and university library shelves. In addition, a volume on Ayn Rand is included in the Continuum Press series: Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers. It follows that if nonaligned critics and editors find a study of Rand as qualifying in substantially the same category as studies of Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, and Ludwig von Mises, among others in the series, then Rand's ideas are not only "part of American culture" (46), as Campbell proclaims, but also significantly situated in a larger cultural context.

Having been an appreciative reader of both of these biographies, I am grateful for Campbell's insightful review essay. It accomplishes what good criticism should—articulates for the reader the salient points of what is being reviewed, something the reader may have intuited, but not articulated for himself or herself. I am reminded of Pope's definition of wit: "What oft was thought/but ne'er expressed so well." Campbell does this for us. Our response to his assessments is "of course," as Campbell differentiates the pertinent merits of each work. As he explains, Heller and Burns would naturally emphasize

that in Rand's life and work which is most relevant to their individual areas of professional expertise, and he presents several examples. Thus, if one is more interested in the political, Campbell directs the reader to Burns; on the other hand, if literary judgments are valued, Heller takes precedence. What is particularly helpful is that not only does Campbell enumerate specific supportive instances from each work, but he also provides the reader with the relevant pages, so that one can follow up on the insight. In some cases, Campbell finds a balance between the works. Such is the situation in the treatment of Rand's relationship with Isabel Patterson. Campbell notes that both Heller and Burns give Patterson the attention and credit she deserves in an Ayn Rand biography.

When he evaluates the resources available to each author, Campbell points out that while Burns had unimpeded access to the Ayn Rand Archives, she did not speak Russian herself and so had to rely on the translations made by people with an ARI affiliation. Heller, on the other hand, hired her own independent firm in Russia to do research on Rand's early life. He concludes that "Each book offers telling details previously unknown" (50). I have one small correction in relation to what information about Rand's Russian background was available and when. Campbell states that "no one around her knew that her last name had been Rosenbaum, a fact not publicly revealed until *The Passion of Ayn Rand* was published" in 1986 (50). *The Ayn Rand Companion*, published two years earlier than *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (Branden 1986) was the first published source to reveal that information (Gladstein 1984, 7).

As neither work is a hagiographic portrayal, Campbell reminds us where both writers digress from the ARI-approved dogma that tends to idealize rather than analyze. Both biographers are "frank about Rand's thirty years of dependence on Benzedrine" (Campbell 2013, 50) and then each theorizes about the possible effects of the drug on her personality and thinking.

Where Campbell is especially effective is when he addresses both writers' shortcomings in the area of "Amateur Psychotherapy." His analysis of the questionable practices among the "retrograde" procession of house psychologists among the Rand adherents is spot-on, and he rightly takes both authors to task for not rendering a "a negative judgment on Rand's decision" to act as Nathaniel Branden's therapist in the wake of their affair (55–56). He tellingly points out that while they criticize Branden for his deficient training in psychotherapy when he was associated with Rand, they fail to find fault with Rand, who had absolutely no training.

Campbell's review excels also in illuminating the poor scholarly practices of ARI, in particular detail for the case of James Valliant's ARI-approved *The Passion of Ayn Rand's Critics* (2005). This is done in the context of pointing out that although Burns was allowed some access, she was not allowed to quote from Rand's diaries, and Heller never saw them at all, so both writers had to rely

on Valliant's book. Campbell identifies Valliant as a "C-list Peikovian," and goes on to indict the policy that would give "undeserved status" to an inferior writer "whose only notable qualities are his slavish adherence" to the ARI viewpoint and willingness to toe the line (Campbell 2013, 53).

Another of the misguided policies is for ARI-approved books to willfully ignore any scholarship that is not their own product or the product of an "anointed" one. This makes a mockery of what can only generously be called bibliography. Campbell also notes that post-publication of her biography, Burns called Valliant's supposed defense of Rand something "that can only with charity be called a book" (62).

Another helpful aspect of Campbell's review is his identification of the areas of needed study and elaboration. In that context he points out that Frank O'Connor "still eludes every biographer" (60). One wonders if it will ever be possible to do anything but theorize about Rand and O'Connor's relationship. The data defy definitive conclusions. Finally, to flesh out Campbell's case for whether or not such books as these two biographies will result in a more open attitude toward "unauthorized" scholars, I would like to surmise that it is not that crucial to Rand's move to the mainstream. It is just one of those peculiarities that independent scholars note and work around.

A final piece of evidence that Rand is among the canonical is so blatant that one might miss it because of its obvious nature. It is the very fact that we are writing in *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* that, along with other such scholarly one-writer journals as *The Chaucer Review*, *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, and *The Eugene O'Neill Review*, is published by Pennsylvania State University Press, hardly a bastion of "over and against" writers.

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Reply to Robert L. Campbell: Landscapes Overlooked

ANNE CONOVER HELLER

ABSTRACT: This letter suggests that certain aspects of Rand's life and work are overlooked by Robert L. Campbell, in his essay "An End to Over and Against" (*The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 13, no. 1), which reviewed *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* by Jennifer Burns and *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* by Anne C. Heller.

I wrote *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* (Heller 2009) to shed as much light as possible on the biographical facts of Ayn Rand's life as they influenced the creation of her novels, which I think of as her best and most persuasive work. During her lifetime, Rand took pains to disavow some basic facts about her life. She liked to say that she was an American by birthright and a native Russian and, presumably, a Jew by fate or accident. She claimed that neither her family of origin nor the country she was born in had any meaning for her, because they were "accidental," "not chosen" by her own free will. She was a "being of self-made soul." The only intellectual influences she acknowledged were the works of Aristotle and Victor Hugo. These assertions are implausible on their face, and Barbara Branden's 1986 *The Passion of Ayn Rand* did little to rectify them, although it accomplished much else that was good and necessary. With the opening of Russian government archives to scholars in the late 1990s, with Rand's literary papers having been donated to the Library of Congress, and with a strong curiosity about what Rand read, thought, and wrote from childhood on, I set out to clarify the facts that provided the biographical foundation for the work.

So it was that I eventually drew a number of conclusions that I think are important but that Robert L. Campbell's long and thoughtful essay, "An End to Over and Against" (Campbell 2013), overlooks. Rand's love of engineering and technology is Russian. Her emphasis on production and on ideology rather than on personal consumption and sensation is also Russian, as is the conviction that great imaginative literature outstrips screeds and direct political action when it comes to changing history and people's minds. I discovered the unusual influence of children's stories—both her own and others', but particularly a French serial called "The Mysterious Valley"—on her adult fiction and thereby established a certain fixedness of mind in Rand, from the earliest days until the end of her life. Although she almost never spoke of being Jewish—and once cautioned her husband's niece not to speak about the girl's father's Jewish ancestry—her two most popular novels can be seen, in part, as a response

to what was politely called “the Jewish problem” in the fiercely anti-Semitic Russian and European culture of her youth. The fact that she *had* to grapple with the issue of having been born a Jew has become clearer to me as I examine the life of the great Hannah Arendt, who was born one year later than Rand and only 500 miles to the west, in what is now Kaliningrad, for a new biography to be published in 2015.

I sense that Campbell is less interested in Rand’s literary than in her ideological output, but I urge her admirers not to forget that she cemented her deepest values in the fictional characters and landscapes she created.

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Rejoinder to Jennifer Burns, Anne Conover Heller, and Mimi Reisel Gladstein: Psychology, Jewishness, and Noting and Working Around

ROBERT L. CAMPBELL

ABSTRACT: I offer a few thoughts in response to the comments on my review by Jennifer Burns, Anne Conover Heller, and Mimi Reisel Gladstein.

I’m looking at what every reviewer hopes for. The authors of the books under review, along with a third expert, provide commentary. All three obviously understand the point of my review. Jennifer Burns and Mimi Gladstein agree that it largely succeeded in doing what it set out to do. And I don’t think that on this score Anne Heller and I are really so far apart.

I appreciate Jennifer Burns’s elaborations on two points that I raised concerning psychology. First, on Ayn Rand’s decision to act as a therapist to Nathaniel Branden and Barbara Branden:

Why did I not criticize Rand for this particular action? In part, I think it is because her claim to be Barbara and Nathan’s “therapist” seemed so absurd on the face of it. These sessions, which represent some of the

darkest tendencies of historical Objectivism, were so far beyond the bounds of typical therapeutic interaction that I treated them more as pathological symptoms than a legitimate attempt at either healing or interpersonal conflict resolution. (2014, 81)

Yes, it would be obvious to the general run of humankind that taking on the role of therapist to her secret lover and his estranged wife was a manipulative assertion of authority over two subordinates, not to mention a completely nutty undertaking. But, as Burns knows from her sojourn in those parts, some in Rand-land profess not to see it this way. Exhibit A is James Valliant (2005), to whose book we all must turn if we want to read any of Rand's notes that came out of the "therapy." Valliant has claimed to be perfectly okay with it, even praised Rand's alleged therapeutic insights, and he is not alone. The point does have to be made.

Second, situating Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden in the history of American psychology would, as Burns notes, make an excellent research project. Several different projects, in fact.

The insights into human motivation that we find in literary classics, even in the works of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, need not lose their force when psychoanalytic theories, with their reified forces and warring parts of the soul, are rejected. Mainstream American psychology has no room for Ayn Rand's claim that human emotions are down-the-line products of premises. Yet in 2014 very few mainstream psychologists accept Freudian or Jungian theory either. Meanwhile, psychologists' opinions of Somerset Maugham's novel *Of Human Bondage* (a favorite target of Branden's, during his Nathaniel Branden Institute [NBI] days, and not just anywhere, but in his lecture on the psychology of sex; Branden 2009, 423–25) would cover a wide range today.

Nor can we conclude that if someone's books rack up sales in paperback—even if the person has conducted workshops at the Esalen Institute—that he or she is necessarily a pop psychologist. The talk therapy pioneered by Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Albert Ellis is serious clinical psychology; Rogers was also one of the very first in his field to insist on empirical studies assessing to what extent therapy actually helped the client. As it gained ascendancy culturally, some of the rhetoric and the moves of modern talk therapy worked their way down into media and marketing, psychobabble, and educatorspeak. The same thing happened with Freud earlier; the same will happen with other schools of thought in the future. One can gain traction in pop psychology without being primarily oriented toward it. Rogers and Maslow are already in the history books for psychology; Ellis will likely be joining them; Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie won't be. Meanwhile, some academics lump all working clinicians and counselors, no matter how they were trained or how

receptive they might be to empirical studies, into the same category as Peale or Carnegie (see Campbell 2001 for a few of the gulfs and divisions within American psychology).

As Burns has indicated, the degree of affiliation between left- and right-wing politics (as roughly defined in American culture) and various strains of psychology is definitely worth a closer look. It doesn't detract from their importance that relationships are apt to prove complicated. After his break with Rand, Branden took up self-acceptance, which moved him significantly closer to the views and practices of Rogers, Maslow, and Ellis; yet he remained a libertarian, where they had all been left-liberals. Ellis was still holding Branden's politics against him in 2006. An example from our own time: most practitioners of Positive Psychology are left-liberals, but this may simply be a function of the prevailing milieu in academic psychology; Positive Psych was developed and is still guided by academic researchers. On the other hand, we may be reasonably sure that the ideas and procedures of Positive Psych, aiming to promote a fulfilled and meaningful life for each individual, won't appeal either to Marxists awaiting communal salvation via revolution, or to evangelicals wishing all of their cars suddenly driverless in case of the Rapture.

Anne Heller (2014) finds my review insufficiently receptive to two themes in *Ayn Rand and the World She Made*.

Rand spent her first twelve years in czarist Russia, which was systematically hostile to Jews, then another eight in the Soviet Union, whose rulers' policy occasionally got as enlightened as equal-opportunity repression. While Rand during her American years rarely spoke of being born Jewish, Heller maintains that *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* are (among other things) oblique responses to what was once called "the Jewish problem."

I actually agree with Heller on this; maybe I took the issue too much for granted because I was writing for *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*. I wouldn't question Ayn Rand's Jewishness, any more than I question her Russianness. Like Sciabarra ([1995] 2013), I don't believe for a minute that Rand, much as she might have wanted to, could successfully exempt herself from being historically and culturally situated. My pointer (Campbell 2013, 64n4) to Yuri Slezkine's book *The Jewish Century*—a book that does not mention Rand but easily could and obviously should have—was intended to signify the importance of this theme.¹ Second, Heller maintains that Rand's most important contributions were her novels. My interest in Rand's philosophy does not incline me to argue with that judgment. Unlike some in Rand-land, I've never read *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* as crib sheets for next week's exam on Objectivism. But while I've appreciated many of the literary analyses of Rand's fiction that I've encountered, and can only wish for more, I'm not a literary critic, by trade or by training. My sole effort in that field was a meditation on the

character and significance of Eddie Willers (Campbell 2007). As a psychologist, historian of ideas, and music writer (I didn't retire from music criticism after one publication), I don't know how to avoid being "less interested in Rand's literary than in her ideological output" (Heller 2014, 87). Or, at the very least, having less to say about one than the other. Those whose primary interest is in Rand's literary output really ought to read Heller (2009), as directed.

Finally, I appreciate the correction from Mimi Gladstein, who publicly revealed Ayn Rand's full Russian name in her first *Ayn Rand Companion*, after Rand's death but two years before *The Passion of Ayn Rand*. Gladstein encourages us not to get too concerned whether the doors of the Ayn Rand Archives are opened to scholars not affiliated with Leonard Peikoff and his Ayn Rand Institute. "It is just one of those peculiarities," she says, "that independent scholars note and work around" (2014, 85). Anne Heller, with considerable success, has already noted it and worked around it. Meanwhile, I have been in communication with Jeff Britting for a little over a year now, about the Archives' holdings of recordings and transcripts of Ayn Rand's question and answer sessions.² These items, apparently, had not even been inventoried when contact was established in January 2013; now I hear that they have been. At press time, I have yet to sign any Archival forms or receive the information I requested. I may yet. And if I do not . . . it will have been duly noted and worked around.

NOTES

1. However, it appeared only in an endnote. I think it fair to wonder, along with Slezkine, whether ethnic Russians, now that the proportion of Jews in their country's population has touched its lowest level in several hundred years, are all going to bog down into *Oblomovshchina* and general ineffectuality.

2. I originally requested this information in 2010, while working on the manuscript that became Campbell 2011. There was no response at the time.

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