

Review Essay

Review Essay: Allan Gotthelf and Gregory Salmieri's (ed.) *A Companion to Ayn Rand*

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Over thirty million copies of English-language editions of Ayn Rand's books have been sold since the 1940s, with many more in dozens of other languages, and sales have not slowed down (p. 15 n. 1). This popularity has occurred and continues despite academia being largely silent about her work and the mainstream media usually being hostile even to the mention of her name.¹ Selections from some of Rand's non-fiction work (e.g., "The Objectivist Ethics") have occasionally been anthologized and a small handful of scholars publish research about Rand and her philosophy, Objectivism. However, her moral theory has often been mischaracterized as a version of psychological egoism or utility-oriented hedonism when paired with (or entirely displaced by) pieces that challenge egoism.² Such

¹ A small sample of vitriol hurled at Rand's work in popular media includes: "complete lack of charity"; "execrable claptrap" and "a personality as compelling as a sledge hammer"; "crackpot . . . an historical anachronism and a wretched novelist"; "an absurd philosophy" and "a total crock." See, respectively, Bruce Cook, "Ayn Rand: A Voice in the Wilderness," *Catholic World*, vol. 201 (May 1965), p. 121; John Kobler, "The Curious Cult of Ayn Rand," *The Saturday Evening Post* (November 11, 1961), p. 99; Dora Jane Hamblin, "The Cult of Angry Ayn Rand," *Life* (April 7, 1967), p. 92; Geoffrey James, "Top 10 Reasons Ayn Rand Was Dead Wrong," *CBS News Moneywatch* (September 16, 2010), accessed online at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/top-10-reasons-ayn-rand-was-dead-wrong/>.

² For examples of this phenomenon, see, e.g., the widely anthologized James Rachels, "Ethical Egoism," in his *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2003), pp. 76-90, and Louis Pojman, "Egoism and Altruism: A Critique of Ayn Rand," in *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*, 9th ed., ed. Louis Pojman and Lewis Vaughn (New York: Oxford University

responses have usually been grounded in ignorance of her literary and philosophical work or in significant misunderstanding of her unconventional ideas.

A Companion to Ayn Rand—one of the most recent volumes in the prestigious Blackwell Companion to Philosophy series—provides a necessary and welcome correction to the professional lacunae on Rand’s contribution to philosophy.³ Editors Gregory Salmieri and Allan Gotthelf have done well in bringing together fellow contributors for the task of presenting Rand’s ideas in an accessible yet scholarly respectable way. It will also go far, for those who take the time to read this carefully distilled essence of Rand’s work, in dispelling the many falsehoods and misrepresentations that abound about her ideas. Regardless of whether one agrees or not with the tenets and applications of her philosophy, this volume depicts the full range of Rand’s intellectual achievement, enlightening those unfamiliar with her work and enriching the understanding of those who know it well.

The volume is divided into six parts and a coda. Part I (“Context”) is composed of Salmieri’s “Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study of Ayn Rand” and Shoshana Milgram’s “Chapter 2: The Life of Ayn Rand.” Although the chapters of this volume can be read independently of one another, Salmieri explains that there is an organizing principle behind the ordering of the chapters, so readers could benefit from following their order: context, ethics, society (economics, politics, and law), history/culture, and art. He also helpfully identifies challenges that readers may face in pursuing the worthwhile task of taking Rand’s work seriously. These include her framing traditional philosophical issues in unusual ways that many find alien and difficult to grasp, often employing a polemical tone, and being a systematic thinker who did not present her philosophy systematically. These challenges underscore the need for a volume such as this one.

Milgram offers a brief biography of Rand, structuring it—as Rand probably would have endorsed—in terms of the stages of her work. Born in 1905 and raised in Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution, Rand knew from the age of nine that she wanted to be a writer. Dedicating herself to that goal involved fleeing communist

Press, 2014), pp. 482-87.

³ Allan Gotthelf and Gregory Salmieri, eds., *A Companion to Ayn Rand* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).

Russia in 1926 to seek freedom and pursue her life's vision in the United States. Milgram explains how Rand's life until her death in 1982 was intricately and consciously woven with her choice to be a novelist-philosopher (p. 22). Originally working in film and theater on screenplays and scripts, Rand moved on to penning novels—culminating in her magnum opus *Atlas Shrugged* (1957)—in which she depicts her heroic view of “the ideal man.” Although Rand's novels gained an ardent popular audience, the ubiquitously vicious, negative critical reception of her work led her to realize “the urgency of the need for fundamental philosophical and cultural change” (p. 31). She devoted the rest of her days to non-fiction by writing essays, delivering lectures, and giving interviews about her radical new “philosophy for living on earth” (p. 31).

Part II (“Ethics and Human Nature”) delves into various aspects of Rand's distinctive moral theory, arguably the centerpiece of how to “live on earth.” Salmieri's “Chapter 3: The Act of Valuing (and the Objectivity of Value)” unpacks the nature of valuing and how Rand's view involves objectivity. The act of valuing reflects one's choice to live meaningfully, not merely exist (p. 49). This is not an intellectual exercise. We also need to produce values in the world, to cultivate our spiritual aspect (i.e., our consciousness, mind, emotions, character) in order to remain materially in existence as the kind of being we are. Two key points are involved here. The first is that while productive work, which Rand has *The Fountainhead*'s Howard Roark refer to as “the meaning of life” (p. 60), is focused on the livelihood one pursues to earn a living, she understands it more broadly and fundamentally as the work of being human. This involves bringing into existence all of the values one needs to live, including love, friendship, and art. The second point is the objectivity of valuing. It's not enough that we are passionate and independent about the values we hold and that we live with integrity according to them. We also must value rationally in accordance with the requirements of our nature: “The *choice to think* is the basic act of valuing. In engaging one's mind, one embraces the world and one brings oneself into existence as a thinking being. Reason is the faculty by which human beings discover our needs, circumstances, and abilities . . . and by which we project values” (p. 64).

In “Chapter 4: The Morality of Life,” Gotthelf (completed by Salmieri⁴) outlines the structure of the Objectivist ethics. Rand first

⁴ This chapter was completed by Salmieri because Allan Gotthelf passed away on August 30, 2013.

addresses a crucial question prior to puzzling over which moral theory we should live by: Why do we need values at all? It's because of the "*conditional character of life*" (p. 77). All living beings face the alternatives of life and death; life makes value possible for each organism. Each thing's kind of life is its standard of value, and its own life is its purpose. Since humans by nature have a rational, volitional consciousness, "man's survival *qua* man" requires that he choose to think, to use his rational faculty to discover and produce "the values one's survival requires" (p. 78). Man's life is our ultimate value, which is constituted and realized by the values of reason, purpose, and self-esteem (p. 81). The way by which we produce these values and experience the happiness that results from achieving them is through their concomitant virtues: rationality, productiveness, and pride—with independence, integrity, honesty, and justice being aspects of rationality (pp. 81-96). Contrary to popular belief and prominent rival moral theories (such as duty ethics and utilitarianism), this makes morality and virtue "selfish," that is, in one's self-interest properly conceived. A wholehearted commitment to one's happiness across a lifespan is thus extremely demanding, making those who truly live "moral heroes" (p. 97).

Onkar Ghate, in "Chapter 5: A Being of Self-Made Soul," explains that Rand sought through literature and philosophy "to understand what man is and what he can and ought to be" (p. 105). As beings of volitional consciousness, choice is central to revealing and shaping who we are. Human free will is "the power to activate one's conceptual faculty and direct its processing, or not," making one's "primary choice" the choice "to exert the full mental effort required to initiate and sustain one's conceptual awareness of the world or to refrain (partially or fully) from doing so" (p. 108). Choosing to think rationally is key to human survival; no matter how welcoming or hostile our environment, one always retains "sovereign control over [one's] mind" (p. 113). We each are beings of "self-made soul," but only rational choice creates efficacy. This makes the proper use of free will tightly connected to achieving full self-esteem and having a positive "sense of life" (pp. 116-23).

In "Chapter 6: Egoism and Altruism," Salmieri focuses on how Rand's ethical egoism is similar to and different from other versions of egoism, as well as on the contrast between egoism and altruism. All versions of egoism hold that "action is taken with the ultimate goal of benefiting oneself" (p. 131). *How* this is done accounts for the

differences between egoistic theories. Rand holds that ethical egoism is pursued by rational choice, not by some innate, nonrational drive, as psychological egoists hold (e.g., Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner) (p. 133). She also believes that one's self-interest is attained by one's "own rational achievement of a self-sustaining life," not by taking any actions whatsoever that might maximize some psychological state (e.g., pleasure), as egoistic consequentialists hold (e.g., Thomas Hobbes and Epicurus) (p. 134). All of these views are contrasted with altruism ("other-ism"), a word coined by August Comte in defense of the view that "self-sacrifice is a moral ideal" (p. 139). Rand regarded altruism as immoral for many reasons, including that it subverts the positive purpose of life by demanding one to give up a higher value for a lower one, is incompatible with love and benevolence, and makes suffering rather than health morally primary (pp. 141-44). Rand defends the "virtue of selfishness" against those who misunderstand the self and self-interest. Salmieri sums up how the selfish heroes of Rand's novels fly in the face of conventional, false views of selfishness: "They are respectful of the rights of others, have deep friendships and romantic relationships, and are committed to long-range values and abstract principles" (p. 145).

Building on Rand's ethical insights, Part III ("Society") draws out the implications of Objectivist ethics for human interaction at the social levels of economics, politics, and law. Chapters 7-10 repeatedly echo Salmieri's point that Rand's version of egoism leads to something completely different from what's predicted by conventional views of selfishness. Darryl Wright explains, in "Chapter 7: 'A Human Society,'" Rand's view of life in a society of rational egoists. Since individuals are focused on the achievement of spiritual and material value, they deal with each other through trade. Rand calls this the "trader principle" (pp. 159-60), which involves recognizing one another as ends-in-ourselves with our own lives to live (pp. 163-67). Rational actors' interests harmonize, not conflict, since what's of value is not only the material or spiritual object sought, but also the *way* by which we achieve it (pp. 167-72). Such benefits cannot be gotten under anarchy, which lacks the objective rules provided by political, legal, and economic institutions to protect "the individual's ability to function as a moral agent" (p. 173).

Enter the role played by government, the subject of Fred D. Miller, Jr. and Adam Mossoff's "Chapter 8: Political Theory." Government's purpose is limited, on Rand's view, to the "protection of individual rights," that is, of allowing individuals "freedom of action in

a social context” by prohibiting (and punishing) the initiation of force against one another (p. 187). Proper functions of the state include military, police, and law courts; governments are enabled to do all of this by “hold[ing] a legal monopoly on the use of physical force,” “possess[ing] exclusive *territorial* sovereignty,” and enforcing objective rules of conduct (p. 188). Each person’s right to his life is identified as the “source of all rights,” with “the right to property [as] their only implementation” (p. 195). Because Rand views humans as integrated beings possessing spiritual and material aspects, “all property is fundamentally intellectual,” for we need mind and body to produce the values needed to live as “man *qua* man” (p. 199).

Tara Smith explains, in “Chapter 9: Objective Law,” that it’s the “objectivity of the legal system,” via morally grounded Rule of Law (versus Rule of Men), that constrains government and allows it to do its job of protecting individual rights. All and only those laws needed for this purpose are justified (p. 212). One of the greatest threats to the protection of individual rights occurs when non-objective law creeps into the legal system, whether by vaguely worded laws, unconstitutional and unchecked judicial interpretation, or failure to apply valid laws. An objective legal system needs constant vigilance against lobby groups that seek to gain special favors through “political pull,” a maneuver that violates rights and turns citizens into adversaries (pp. 210-15).

In “Chapter 10: ‘A Free Mind and a Free Market Are Corollaries,’” Ghate outlines Rand’s moral defense of capitalism. It’s grounded in man’s nature, which requires freedom for individuals to choose to think, form their own value-judgments, and live with the outcome of acting on their judgment. Law should thus “prohibit the government from interfering with the economic judgments and lives of citizens: there must be full freedom to produce, contract, and trade” (p. 223). Since each person is free to create value and responsible for earning his way in a market, there is no guarantee of success; free markets enable wise choosers to succeed and poor choosers to fail. All learn valuable information by not being shielded from the effects of their choices. Ghate explains how Rand addresses those who refuse to accept the outcomes of free markets: the alternative of interfering with the economy amounts to shackling and being paternalistic toward producers and consumers. Those who seek to control markets through legal-political mechanisms bypass individuals’ conceptual faculties and substitute their own judgment, asserting either that they have

insight into what's intrinsically valuable or that the needs of the many trump any individual's judgment (pp. 228-29 and 233-36).

We are introduced to "The Foundations of Objectivism" in Part IV, which are anchored in metaphysics and epistemology. Central to Rand's view of the nature of reality, Jason Rheins explains in "Chapter 11: Objectivist Metaphysics," is the "primacy of existence," which "holds that there is a mind-independent reality, which can be perceived and understood by (human consciousness), but which is not created or directly shaped by consciousness" (p. 246). This metaphysical principle involves three axiomatic concepts: existence, identity, and consciousness. That is, entities exist that have natures we can perceive and objectively know by means of the active conceptual faculties of our consciousness (pp. 246-48). Rheins also unpacks more fully Rand's view of our volitional nature by exploring how we have "direct introspective awareness" of exercising free will (p. 261). Rand's view of volition is known as "agent-causation." According to this view, our natures are caused by something outside of our control, but our choices are caused by us, making us "self-determining" beings (p. 261)—or, as Ghate noted, "beings of self-made soul."

In order to discuss what exists, one must grapple with *how* we know what exists. Salmieri thus tackles Rand's theory of knowledge in "Chapter 12: The Objectivist Epistemology." He contextualizes her view of reason in the history of philosophy and outlines the structure of her rigorous method for acquiring knowledge. Rand is a "direct realist" about perception, which takes as given what's perceived through our senses (p. 281). We then form basic and higher-level abstractions through an active process of differentiation, integration, and measurement-omission (pp. 284-89). Concepts are objective by being grounded in and corresponding to existing entities (pp. 290-92). We define concepts based on "whichever essential characteristic(s)" explain the most others "*relative to a given context of knowledge*" (p. 293). Our conceptual faculty is cognitively efficient and powerful in enabling humans to move beyond the perceptual level and allowing us to grasp, organize, and convey through language vast amounts of understanding about ourselves and the world.

Part V ("Philosophers and Their Effects") examines both Rand's place in the history of philosophy and Rand's views about intellectual history—where it's come from and where it could go. In "Chapter 13: 'Who Sets the Tone for a Culture?'" James Lennox explains that since Rand sees philosophy as no idle armchair activity, but as vitally important in how well or poorly human life goes, she

developed a method for studying intellectual history. According to Rand, one should boil down the thought of key influential thinkers (e.g., Aristotle and Immanuel Kant) into “philosophical essentials,” maintain “objectivity of definitions” to avoid mischaracterizing schools of thought and differences between them, and trace cultural trends “back to their philosophical sources” (pp. 324-25). Studying history generally, and the history of philosophy in particular, this way allows us to generalize accurately, see how ideas have consequences, and to apply lessons learned from history in our future choices.

“Chapter 14: Ayn Rand’s Evolving Views of Friedrich Nietzsche,” by Lester Hunt, may seem like an odd chapter to include in this volume, since it’s the only one about a specific thinker (who isn’t Rand) rather than an area of philosophy. However, Hunt explains that Nietzsche “is no doubt the one philosopher with whom Ayn Rand is most often associated in popular discussions of her ideas” (p. 343). Since this is a false and widespread association, it’s important to correct systematically the error in a brief chapter of its own. While Rand had read Nietzsche when she was young and even found inspiring some of his aphorisms taken out of context, she early on rejected his philosophy for several fundamental reasons: Rand defends reason and the objectivity of value, while Nietzsche is an irrationalist; she defends free will, while he is a determinist; she thinks that man’s power to create value for his own life is good, while he advocates the “will to power” over others; she defends the voluntary “trader principle,” while he sees human relationships in terms of a master-slave dynamic (pp. 345-48).

Salmieri and John David Lewis, in “Chapter 15: A Philosopher on Her Times,”⁵ sketch the two stages of Rand’s work as a cultural critic. Having lived through some of the horrors of Russia’s communist revolution, she dabbled in anti-communist writing and activism from 1936-1946 (pp. 352-55). As already noted by Milgram, Rand realized the philosophically bankrupt state of American culture—on both the Right and the Left—after the culmination of her literary career in 1957. This led, Salmieri and Lewis explain, to Rand’s embarking on a second wave of cultural criticism from 1959-1982. This time, she sought to develop philosophically grounded “intellectual ammunition” to do what’s now referred to as “applied philosophy.” That is, she explained how Objectivist principles apply to a wide variety of issues and

⁵ Salmieri co-authored, and also completed, this chapter because John Lewis passed away on January 3, 2012.

policies of her day, from antitrust legislation and the draft to civil rights and abortion.

Art is the subject matter of Part VI. In “Chapter 16: The Objectivist Esthetics,” Harry Binswanger describes the special place that Rand accorded art in man’s life. Not utilitarian, but useful, not mystical, but spiritual, art provides the “emotional fuel” (p. 409) necessary for “the preservation and survival of [one’s] consciousness” on which one’s physical survival depends (p. 405). Art is able to evoke this emotional response in us, as both creators and consumers of art, by embodying in concrete form one’s view of life and providing a perceptual source of inspiration (p. 409). Aesthetic judgments should be rendered on artistic criteria—namely, “how consistently, clearly and powerfully it expresses *its* philosophic viewpoint” (pp. 419-20)—not on the validity of the creator’s viewpoint.

Judging an artist’s viewpoint is a moral assessment, and Rand has clear views about what she takes to be the morally defensible approach to art. Tore Boeckmann explains what this is, in “Chapter 17: Rand’s Literary Romanticism.” Rand calls her aesthetic approach “Romantic Realism.” Romanticism recognizes the “principle that man possesses the faculty of volition” (*contra* Naturalism’s determinism) and emphasizes “an individual’s vision of what ought to be” (*contra* Classicism’s traditionalism) (pp. 428-29). Central to creating Romantic literature that projects the author’s values are carefully crafted plot, theme, and characterization. What makes this Realism is that the imaginative projection of “what is possible to human beings” is objectively grounded in man’s nature (pp. 444-45).

The volume closes with a Coda, “Chapter 18: The Hallmarks of Objectivism,” by Gotthelf and Salmieri. Two hallmarks of Objectivism—the “benevolent universe premise” and the “heroic view of man”—are crucial, they maintain, for understanding both the “tremendous emotional resonance” that Rand’s ideas have with people who love her work and the “visceral hatred” for Rand’s work experienced by those who reject her views (p. 453). The first hallmark involves the belief that our world is one in which humans can successfully live, where happiness can be the expected result of diligent rational choices made over a lifetime (pp. 454-58). The second one holds that each person can commit to “realizing his highest potential,” and thus it’s possible for each to “achieve a heroic stature” (pp. 459 and 460).

Since the volume’s purpose is not to advocate Objectivism, but to serve as an introduction or guide to the study of Rand’s work (p. 6),

I will not evaluate the philosophical ideas and arguments presented in each chapter. Instead, the focus will be on whether the volume has achieved its purpose of being a *companion to Ayn Rand* by providing information about its subject to its intended audience. Fortunately, those who have been *companions of*—that is, people who have become closely acquainted with and knowledgeable of—her work, serve as the contributing authors.

Structurally, the volume's topics may appear to the philosophical eye to be out of logical order. As indicated by the title of Part IV, epistemology and metaphysics are the foundations of any philosophical system. However, as Salmieri notes in Chapter 1, beginning with Rand's ethical theory rather than metaphysics and epistemology, offers readers a more "natural path through the subject matter" (p. 14). This decision reflects a wise pedagogical point made by Aristotle: "One must begin from what is known, but this has two meanings, the things known to us and the things that are known simply. Perhaps then we, at any rate, ought to begin from the things that are known to us."⁶ Aristotle's point here is that we know things through our perceptual and immediate experience as well as through reasoning to first principles with our intellectual faculties. We cannot reach higher-order conceptual knowledge *a priori* without first experiencing the world and reflecting on those experiences. Applying this (Objectivist-sounding) principle to Salmieri's reason for structuring the volume the way he does, we can see that humans are far more familiar with facing meaningful ethical choices from a young age (e.g., "Should I tell my parents that I am the one who ate the cookies?") than they are with grasping the nature of reality and how we can know it. Hence, most people would find that starting with ethics provides an easier entry point into Rand's philosophy.

Another good structural decision about *A Companion to Ayn Rand* concerns the choice to gather citations and detailed commentary at the ends of the chapters as endnotes rather than in footnotes at the bottom of each page. At a whopping 77 pages of endnotes and 27 pages of bibliographical references (out of 461 pages), over 20% of the volume's main contents are composed of such material. Non-scholars would find that much material gathered at the bottoms of pages to be visually cluttered and distracting, not to mention daunting to read. Scholars, on the other hand, can turn back and forth eagerly to the copious endnotes. They will see how the volume's contributors, each

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Indianapolis, IN: Focus, 2002), I.4.1095b2-4.

of whom is a specialist in his respective field, engage extensively (unlike Rand herself) with the relevant academic literature on each topic.

One structural quibble that I have is the choice to place the two “hallmarks of Objectivism” at the end of the volume as a coda. In Chapter 1, Salmieri explains that he and Gotthelf show in Chapter 18 how the hallmarks “follow from the more technical aspects of Rand’s philosophy covered in the earlier chapters” (p. 15). This is not an unreasonable justification for placing such material in a coda. However, based on my own experience as well as having discussed with countless numbers of people over the course of thirty years (since I first read *The Fountainhead* in 1987) their experience with reading Rand’s novels, it is precisely these hallmarks of Objectivism that readers find so magnetic. Giving a sense of this benevolent and inspirational experience at the opening rather than the closing of the volume could intrigue and entice new readers to continue turning the pages of this massive companion. The ensuing pages would then slowly reveal the philosophy that undergirds that positive sense of life.

In terms of the volume’s content in relation to its purpose, two major positive points (with one minor caveat) are worth noting. First, given the fact that Rand wrote tens of thousands of pages worth of fiction and non-fiction material—spanning four novels; hundreds of essays, lectures, and newsletter pieces; and a plethora of journal and letter materials—the contributors to *A Companion to Ayn Rand* have done an admirable job of essentializing and systematizing a vast amount of material. They have also accomplished this in a largely accessible way, so that non-scholars can nearly always follow the complex discussion. The reason why I qualify this first point is that there are a few places throughout the volume (primarily in the longer chapters on ethics and epistemology) where discussions get technical to the point of verging on being confusing for those not steeped in the relevant philosophical literature. A few examples include presentations about the meaning of “life as man *qua* man” (pp. 78-80), eudaimonism (pp. 91-92 and 134-36), and defining reason (pp. 273-79). These debates are fascinating to me, but they perhaps could have been condensed in a clearer fashion with some of the material moved to the endnotes.

Second, these chapters highlight the myriad ways in which Rand’s philosophy is a new and radical departure from previous ways of thinking. Like history’s greatest thinkers before her, she explodes false dichotomies, enabling formerly intractable problems to be

resolved by a “third way.” We see evidence presented for this throughout the volume. To identify a few examples: Gotthelf explains how Rand’s ethical egoism serves as a moral alternative to duty ethics and utilitarianism (pp. 74-76). Salmieri contrasts her version of egoism with other forms of egoism (e.g., psychological and consequentialistic) as well as with altruism (e.g., nationalistic and utilitarian) (pp. 132-41). Smith explains how Rand’s view of objective law differs from the traditional alternatives of Natural Law and Legal Positivism (pp. 216-18). Salmieri shows how Rand’s solution to the “problem of universals” in metaphysics differs from those offered by realists, nominalists, and conceptualists (pp. 289-92). Finally, Boeckmann explains how Rand’s literary theory of Romantic Realism is different from the historically dominant schools of Classicism and Naturalism. Although some of Rand’s ideas (primarily in logic and epistemology) were inspired by insights from the one she regarded as the “greatest of all philosophers”⁷ (i.e., Aristotle), the novelty of her system of thought in intellectual history is undeniable. Like it or not, her work cannot be written off as unimportant or unoriginal.

With the addition of *A Companion to Ayn Rand* to the slowly growing corpus of scholarship on Objectivism,⁸ we can perhaps at last

⁷ Ayn Rand, “The Objectivist Ethics,” in Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 14.

⁸ It began as a tiny trickle in the 1980s with work produced by a small cadre of philosophers inspired by Rand’s ideas, including David Kelley, *The Evidence of the Senses: A Realist Theory of Perception* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986) and *The Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand*, ed. Douglas Rasmussen and Douglas Den Uyl (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984). Scholarship on Rand gained some momentum in the 1990s and has picked up speed in the 2000s across different fields of study, with (1) the production of a few volumes based on Ayn Rand Society sessions held at the American Philosophical Association, such as *Concepts and Their Role in Knowledge: Reflections on Objectivist Epistemology*, ed. Allan Gotthelf and James Lennox (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013); (2) the appearance of some biographies, including Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Anne Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009); and (3) the publication of some full-length studies of Rand’s fiction and non-fiction, such as: Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1991), Tara Smith, *Ayn Rand’s Normative Ethics: The Virtuous Egoist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and *Essays on Ayn Rand’s Atlas Shrugged*, ed. Robert Mayhew (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

get beyond both glib, ill-informed dismissals of Rand's work and the polemical tone of some of her writing. The latter can unfortunately distract readers from the content of her ideas, but it's forgivable in being driven by her earnest concern that we take our lives seriously; the former has no such excuse. Overall, Gotthelf and Salmieri's edited volume successfully weds the twin goals of introducing professional scholars to Rand's ideas in a clear, rigorous, and fair manner and of offering non-scholars an accessible, systematic presentation of her work.

