



The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies: Four Years and Counting

I had been working very hard to secure a copy of the elusive Ayn Rand college transcript from the University of St. Petersburg, an important postscript to my historical and archival work on Rand's beginnings as explored in *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* (Penn State Press, 1995).

Bill Bradford, editor of *Liberty* magazine, had told me that he envisioned two articles that I would write: the first would tell the dramatic story of the struggle to locate the transcript—in the face of serious obstacles to my efforts; the second would present my findings. The first would be published in *Liberty*, said Bradford; the second would be published in a new journal of Rand scholarship that I would edit.

"Huh? A new journal? One that I'd edit? I'm too busy for this! Did you say, a journal of Rand scholarship? Did I hear you correctly? Are you crazy?"

Then, out loud, I said: "Okay."

With the publication of the premier issue of *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies (JARS)* in September of 1999, Bradford, literature professor Stephen Cox, and I had co-founded the first academic periodical devoted to Rand scholarship. Showcasing

the contributions of economics professor Larry Sechrest, psychology professor Robert Campbell, philosopher Gregory Johnson, musician and writer Roger Bissell, Cox and

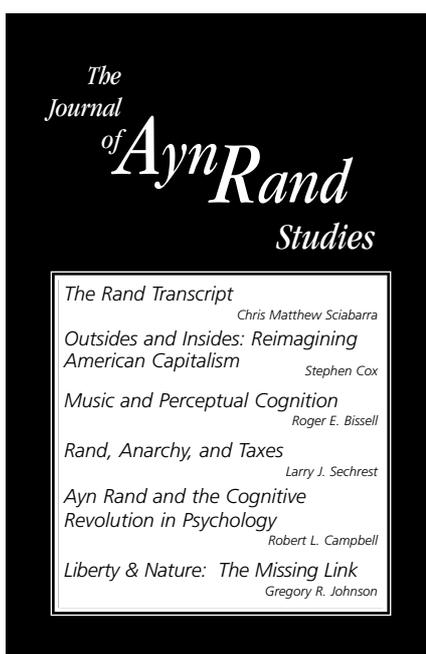
Rand herself—for many years, while offering a strong voice in their respective disciplines.

Even as we've dealt with the potential litigiousness of some and the scowls of others, we have continued publishing twice a year, increasing our subscriber base among both individuals and institutions—from universities to the Library of Congress. In our first four years, we have published nearly 100 essays by scholars in the humanities and social sciences, with over 70 additional essays currently in preparation for our rigorous double-blind review process.

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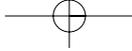
me, the first issue ran the gamut from historical and literary studies to aesthetics, psychology, and ethics. With not a single abstracting or indexing service to our credit, and no official board of advisors to speak of, *JARS* was advertised as a semi-annual "nonpartisan journal devoted to the study of Ayn Rand and her times." Our credo stated further: "The journal is not aligned with any advocacy group, institute, or person. It welcomes papers from every discipline and from a variety of interpretive and critical perspectives. It aims to foster scholarly dialogue through a respectful exchange of ideas." By the time the first issue was available for sale, we had gained a full board of academic advisors, which included Sechrest and Campbell (who has since become Associate Editor), philosophers Douglas Den Uyl, John Hospers, Lester Hunt, Eric Mack, and Douglas Rasmussen, historian Robert Hessen, and English professor Mimi Reisel Gladstein. Each of these scholars has been intimately connected with Rand studies—or, in the case of Hospers and Hessen, with

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The First Issue

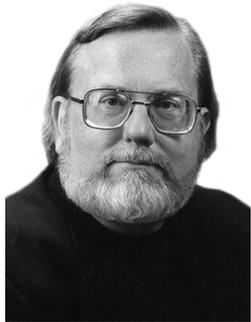
July - August 2003 - **The Free Radical**



Stephen Cox

publications internationally, including *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Art Book* (Quarterly Journal of the British Association of Art Historians), *Education Guardian*, Canada's *National Post*, and *The Village Voice*. It has gained entrance into a dozen abstracting services, where it is indexed in whole or in part:

CSA Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, *IBR (International Bibliography of Book Reviews of Scholarly Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences)*, *IBZ (International Bibliography of Periodical Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences)*, *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences*, *International Political Science Abstracts*, *The Left Index (!!!)*, *The Philosopher's Index*, *The Modern Language Association (MLA)*



Larry Sechrest

International Bibliography, *The MLA Directory of Periodicals*, *Sociological Abstracts*, *Social Services Abstracts*,

and *Women's Studies International*. And our website is linked to *EpistemeLinks.com*, *The History Journals Guide*, *Literature Online*, *Philosophy Resources*, and *SOSIG (Social Science Information Gateway)*.



Robert Campbell

We are poised for major indexing additions in the coming months.

Why are these services so important? For those in search of tenure track appointment, publishing in noted scholarly journals is "the name of the game." By extending our interdisciplinary reach into

prestigious indices, we have become a bona fide academic periodical, thereby attracting more and more submissions from bona fide academics. It is a virtuous circle that is likely to further our impact and acceptance in the academic marketplace, increasing our visibility and the citations to *JARS'* articles in the scholarly literature.

More importantly, however, is the impact of the journal on the proliferation of Rand's ideas into the academy. Just as the journal encourages explorations and applications of Objectivist philosophy through the critical engagement of Objectivists with their interlocutors, so too does it extend the serious discussion of Rand and her legacy far beyond the Objectivist universe. This is part of the process by which ideas spread throughout the culture, including the culture of academia, and it is indispensable to the long-term success of such ideas.

Nevertheless, our progress has not come without some controversy in terms of the reactions to some of the *articles* we've published, as well as the reactions from some of the *authors* we've published. As for *articles*, I have found that it is best to err on the side of liberality; once an article has met the high standards of the review process in terms of scholarly accuracy, it is usually published—even if a peer reader has voiced *substantive* objections to its various theses. The author is encouraged to revise accordingly (and most accepted articles do through several revisions), but the *substantive* debates are often left to the *critical dialogue* that takes place in the pages of the journal. And this is as it should

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be; our original essays have sparked provocative discussions on subjects ranging from abortion, free will, anarchism, and the relationship between Rand and novelist Vladimir Nabokov to dialectical method, implicit epistemology, and aesthetic theory (to which the journal has devoted a formal symposium and several exchanges).

As for *authors*, our most notable controversy occurred with the publication of our Spring 2002 issue, which featured a brief reply by Objectivist philosopher Andrew Bernstein to a previously published review of his *CliffsNotes* monographs on Rand's fiction by literary scholar Kirsti Minsaas. Indeed, the reply was so brief that

Bernstein's biography eclipsed it in length. Still, in the aftermath of the issue's publication, Bernstein felt compelled to make a public apology to all those "sincerely concerned with Objectivism" for having committed a "serious error" in judgment. He just didn't realize that the journal was filled with contributions from people with whom he'd not "knowingly associate under any circumstances." It led him to "recommend a complete repudiation and boycott of this journal and of any and all of Mr. Sciabarra's work."

Alas, the demonization of the journal and of Mr. Sciabarra's work has only contributed, it would seem, to increased sales for both. In the process, the exposure that the journal has given to its contributors continues to stimulate substantive and rigorous debate in a nonpartisan setting.

Our doors remain ... aJAR... open to all those "sincerely concerned with Objectivism," whether they be orthodox advocates, revisionists, or intelligent critics—as long as the treatment of Rand's work is accorded the intellectual respect it deserves.

This article expresses the viewpoints of its author; it is not an "official" statement issued by *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*. Information on content and submissions is available at the journal's website: <<http://www.aynrandstudies.com>>.

For *JARS* subscriptions, fill out and mail in the subscription form at: <<http://www.aynrandstudies.com/jars/subscriptionForm.asp>>. One-year individual subscriptions are \$25 in the United States; \$37 internationally (surface); \$40 institutions. Back issues are available at \$15 per issue, \$27 internationally, as are two, three, four-year, and charter subscriptions.

