

Reply to Critics: *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* - A Work in Progress ¹

by Chris Matthew Sciabarra

Nothing quite compares to the exhilaration that an author feels when his work is being noticed. With over two dozen published and electronic reviews, and hundreds of Internet messages debating the value of my book, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* (Penn State Press, 1995), I now face the challenge of replying to some of my critics more formally, here, in the pages of *Reason Papers*. I want to thank Tibor Machan for giving me this opportunity. For the purposes of this brief article, however, I will focus only on the broad issues sparked by this debate - on the nature of scholarship, historiography, and social science method.² Those who would like to read more pointed discussions of specific critiques of my work should acquaint themselves with my website: <http://pages.nyu.edu/~sciabrcc>.

My study of Ayn Rand remains a work-in-progress, both in content and in method. My conclusions have been based on an incomplete historical record. Indeed, my historical research continues, and I hope to publish, at a future date, the fascinating results of my ever-deepening investigations into Rand's Russian roots. The provisional nature of the early research, however, does not invalidate my thesis; it merely demonstrates a principle enunciated well by David Gordon (1993), that it is extremely difficult to establish lines of influence in intellectual history. In most cases, he tells us, one cannot provide any more than a suggestive hypothesis; on that basis, "no historical interpretation is apodictically true..." (6-7).

My book is also a work-in-progress in the literal sense. It is part of a trilogy that began with *Marx, Hayek, and Utopia* (SUNY Press, 1995) and that will culminate in my forthcoming volume, *Total Freedom*. The trilogy is my attempt to provide a foundation for dialectical approaches to neoliberal social theory. My next book will be far more explicit in its emphasis on the totality of systemic connections between social problems (hence, "total") that beckon toward fundamentally libertarian solutions (hence, "freedom"). *Marx, Hayek, and Utopia* and *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* are prolegomena to that foundation. In my view, both Hayek and Rand exhibit - in diverse ways - a dialectical sensibility, a concern for the organic unity of, and internal relations among, many disparate factors within a specified context. These thinkers inspire neoliberal scholars toward a research programme that does not abstract and reify the political as something separate from the social, cultural, historical, economic, ethical, epistemic, or psychological. My aim is not simply to recycle a tool from the abandoned ideological backyard of Hegelians and Marxists.³ It is to reclaim dialectics as a methodological-research orientation (MRO), fundamentally Aristotelian in its origins, in the name of reality, reason, and radicalism.

My goals here are somewhat less ambitious. By examining criticisms of *Russian Radical* across historical and methodological dimensions, this paper is, ultimately, an invitation to further dialogue.

The Problem of Scholarship

Ah, dialogue! In an on-line exchange, I was characterized by one commentator as among the apostles of "Intellectual Slumming and Licentious Dialoging," perhaps because of my penchant to speak to different audiences on both the left and the right.⁴ But in engaging my most critical interlocutors, I have discovered two tendencies among those who dismiss my work: they do not take Ayn Rand seriously, or they do not take me seriously.

For example, Shelton (1997) rejects my demand that we treat Rand's philosophy "seriously and...with respect." He suggests that we might treat Rand as seriously as we would treat *The Elders of Zion*, *Mein Kampf*, or the Unabomber Manifesto, but certainly not with "respect."⁵ He seems incapable of grasping the notion that it is possible to treat with respect even those with whom you disagree. My aim in *Russian Radical* was primarily interpretive; it was not to defend or attack Rand's philosophic system. To that extent, I ask the reader not to rudely disregard Rand's thought as "pop" philosophy, but to give it the scholarly attention that it deserves. In an age where academics are still "deconstructing" whatever hidden meaning there might be left in the songs of Madonna, I did not think it too controversial to suggest that Ayn Rand be examined respectfully.⁶

However, my own approach has been summarily dismissed by "orthodox" Objectivists like John Ridpath (1996), who views the book as a "truly grotesque" example of "current academic standards, methods, and language" (19). Characterizing me as a "neo-Hegelian," Ridpath views *Russian Radical* as "preposterous in its thesis, destructive in its purpose, and tortuously numbing in its content" (20). He believes that the book is an example of the "academic deconstruction of Ayn Rand" and, hence, "undeserving of serious attention" (21).

These types of criticisms seem to question the very intellectual dialogue that is necessary for Rand's ideas to sustain any academic interest or legitimacy. Shelton is disappointed that my book did not attempt to make Rand "more culturally relevant," only "more academically recondite" (1997, 226). And even some friendly critics lament the "strained" comparisons in my book, such as those between Ayn Rand and contemporary feminism (Svensson 1996).⁷ Ronald Merrill (1995) crystallizes the central issue for scholarship. He asks:

Is membership in the scholarly clique really worthwhile? ... if Sciabarra's book achieves the breakthrough he seeks, Rand will finally be given space in the display case on equal terms with Derrida, Heidegger, and MacKinnon. My. What a privilege.

The issue, in my view, is not simply "membership in the scholarly clique"; it is to drag both academia and Objectivism, kicking and screaming if necessary, into dialogue with one another. By approaching contemporary academics in a language that they might understand, and by forcing Objectivists to confront their intellectual adversaries within the established categories of academia, I believe that each group benefits thereby. Following Rand, who prided herself on being an "outsider" - much like the nonacademic Russian literary artists and social critics who came before her - too many of her successors

have abstained from the give-and-take of scholarly discourse. But as Andrew Collier reminds us:

No philosophy exists in a vacuum; there are always particular opposing philosophies which coexist in any historical period, and every philosophy engages, implicitly or explicitly, in controversy with its opponents. Philosophy may seek truth, but it seeks it in an adversarial as well as in an investigative manner. (1994, 70)

Making Rand relevant to the categorical distinctions that exist, I have adapted her message to what Hayek has called "given climate[s] of opinion" (1960, 1). And through this critical hermeneutic, further implications in Objectivism are revealed in a manner that no one - not Rand, nor her followers, nor her critics, nor I - could have possibly foreseen. The discourse itself is productive of these unintended theoretical consequences.

Now, this does not mean that I am a "deconstructionist," with all the pejorative connotations of that word, for I believe that it is possible to judge the validity of a text by reference to reality or to its explanatory power. My book is *reconstructive*, not *deconstructive*. It aims to reconstruct the Randian project so as to optimize the dialogue. Some might argue, however, that something has been lost - or worse, distorted - in the translation. But in my view, something has been gained. For in using such an established category as "dialectics" to describe Rand's MRO, I am simultaneously undermining its connection to those on the left who have long claimed a monopoly on contextualized, systemic, radical theorizing.

The Problem of History

The philosopher Barry Smith explains that, in our attempts to grasp lines of intellectual influence, historians must deal with

the problem of how much credence one ought to award to self-interpretations when seeking an assessment of the nature and significance of a given thinker's achievements. For self-interpretations are very often flawed because their authors naturally give prominence to the detailed *differences* between their own ideas and the ideas of those around them; they pay attention, in other words, to what is original, quirky, or odd. That which they take for granted, and which they have imbibed from their surrounding culture, is thereby no less naturally and inevitably ignored. (1990, 264)

I could not agree more strongly with Smith's assessment. If we were to pay attention to Rand's "self-interpretations," we would be left with a limited view of her influences. She asserts that Aristotle made the biggest impact on her philosophically. From a literary standpoint, Hugo is mentioned as a chief source of inspiration, though Dostoyevsky, with all his dialectical savvy, is occasionally cited as having affected her literary methods. As for Nietzsche, Rand admits only a youthful fascination with his work, a fancy which she claims to have fast outgrown.

In my own book, however, and in the work of others, Nietzsche's influence on Rand has been given much greater attention. With Merrill (1991) arguing that Rand underwent a bona fide "Nietzschean phase," and with my own study highlighting the impact of Nietzsche on Silver Age Russia, we are gaining a much enriched understanding of Rand's debt to this provocative German philosopher. Indeed, the role of Nietzsche in Rand's Russia is of prime historical importance; his influence on the Russian Symbolists in particular - including Aleksandr Blok, whom Rand characterized as one of her favorite poets - has been the subject of much recent scholarship. Now, along comes Leonard Peikoff, who finally acknowledges that Rand's early *Journals*

reveal an influence of Nietzsche, in the form of droplets of subjectivism, and of the idea that the heroes among men are innately great, as against the inherently corrupt masses, who deserve only bitterness and domination from their superiors. (Peikoff in Rand 1997, ix)

Some of my most vocal critics have applauded my work in this area, but that is only because, as James Lennox writes, "Rand herself reports youthful familiarity with Nietzsche's writing" (1996a, 64). Lennox is not so generous in his assessment of my thesis that Lossky - and a whole generation of Russian literary artists, historians, and social theorists - had a crucially important effect on Rand's intellectual evolution.

Lennox (1996a) maintains that in my exploration of the alleged relationship between Rand and the Russian philosopher, N.O. Lossky, I upgrade "possibilities into established facts" (63). And because I expend "the greatest energy" on the Rand-Lossky relationship, Lennox asserts further that "more hinges" on this connection than I am willing to admit (1995c, 13). McGath (1995) and Hudelson (1996) claim, additionally, that my argument suffers because I was unable to document that Rand ever registered for more than a single philosophy course.

That I *discovered* the evidence which might heighten the reader's skepticism regarding the Rand-Lossky connection, ironically, seems to have eluded the attention of some critics.⁸ That I ultimately *accepted* the reality of Rand's recollections of Lossky was, as Bissell correctly recognizes, merely the best explanation available, given the evidence at my disposal (1996, 87).

But as Lester Hunt suggests, my historical thesis does not require *any* "assumed connection" to Lossky *at all*, since one could find within virtually every school of Russian thought, every textbook, every teacher in the history and philosophy departments of Leningrad University, the same dialectical approach that Lossky employed. Because *Rand* mentioned Lossky in her interviews with Barbara Branden, I focused on him as symbolic of the very dialectical orientation that was endemic to the entire Russian intellectual tradition.

Yet, in keeping with Gordon's caveat that the establishment of intellectual influences in history often leads us to suggestive hypotheses, I have always maintained that my investigation entailed a degree of historical speculation. Lennox (1996c) argues that this very claim is "by itself ... nothing but an admission of failure," and that "mere speculation"

as such, undermines my central thesis (13). Oyerly concurs; he states that "to describe a book as a historical speculation is a contradiction in terms" (1996b, 11). I submit, however, that if we were to accept this dismissal of such speculative hypotheses, we would be compelled to dismiss most studies in intellectual history. Considering that not much documentation of Rand's Russian years is extant, are we to simply close off all inquiry into this crucial period of her development?

What is bothersome to many critics is that my historical thesis - that Rand's thought is as much defined by what she accepted, as by what she rejected, from her Russian past - seems to suggest a kind of cultural determinism. I argue that, even as Rand self-consciously rejected Russian mysticism, collectivism, and statism, she appears to have tacitly absorbed the dialectical methods of her Russian forebears, modes of inquiry that stressed the analytical integrity of the whole. But in a letter to Stanley Greben (October 15, 1950), Rand maintains:

A man's ideas are the *cause* which determines every aspect of his life and character...I am not a product of my "environmental history"...the best advice I can give you is never to regard yourself as a product of your environment. (1995b, 482- 3)

Surely Rand is overstating her case here. One need not be a cultural determinist to admit - as Rand did - that her early work was designed to get Russia out of her system. With her *We the Living* and *Anthem*, for instance, Rand suggested that she "wasn't taking...revenge on [her] background." Still -

It was my intention to wipe out that kind of world totally; I mean I wouldn't want to include Russia or have anything to do with it. My feeling toward Russia at that time was simply an intensified feeling that I've had from childhood and from before the revolutions. I felt that this was so mystical, so depraved, rotten a country that I wasn't surprised that they got a Communist ideology - and I felt that one has to get out and find the civilized world. (1995a, viii-ix)

Rand's recognition of the power of that background, of its ability to shape and alter the destiny of individuals, is most apparent in her letter to Jean Wick (October 27, 1934). Rand explains that in her novel, *We the Living*, the background, the context, *is* the story. Without this background,

there *is no* story. It is the background that creates the characters and their tragedy. It is the background that makes them do the things they do. If one does not understand the background - one cannot understand them. (1995b, 17)

Granted, Rand is speaking here as the novelist - the god - the creator of characters who act in ways that she wills. But it is interesting to note that the "background" of this story is Russia; Rand was supremely aware of how the "airtight" environment of Soviet oppression had destroyed genuinely *human* existence. So much in Rand's corpus relates to these early experiences - her grasp of the organic link between mysticism and statism, her virulent anti-Communism, her distrust of the masses. And this should not be too surprising. Rand reminds us that consciousness is consciousness of *something*, and *that*

something, for the first 21 years of her life, was the reality of Russia, a perfect laboratory within which to draw grand inductive generalizations about relations of power and exploitation as manifested on differential levels of social discourse.

While most of the critics find this scenario plausible, they part company with me when I apply this very notion to those aspects of Rand's Russian past which I regard as *positive*, and which I believe she may have absorbed tacitly. Have I "exaggerate[d] the importance of Rand's Russian background" in this regard, as Svensson claims (1996, 42-3)? How powerful is a person's intellectual atmosphere in shaping her body of work? Does an assertion of the role of culture in shaping human thought deny free will? Does my book embody a "misguided historiography," as Lennox asserts (1996a, 65)?

I can only say that there is no formula that an historian can use in assessing the power of culture and its impact on any individual's life and work. It is a matter open to empirical investigation and judicious speculation. But such study must be founded on certain basic premises: that no person is born outside of a context and that, in each circumstance, we need to investigate the dominant ideas and institutions which partially constitute that context.

The mature Rand argued, I think effectively, that culture is a complex phenomenon that affects people on a mostly tacit level. It is represented in predominating attitudes, in a general emotional atmosphere that becomes the "leitmotif" of a given age and society. People in that society tend to develop, as Rand would say, "the essentials of the same subconscious philosophy" from the earliest impressions of their childhood (Rand 1982, 251). Nathaniel Branden has emphasized further that, even if one does not overtly identify many of these accepted cultural practices, it is virtually impossible for every individual to call these into question *in toto*, "precisely because they are absorbed by a process that largely by-passes the conscious mind" (Branden 1994, 288). This is what culture does - it transmits to individuals implicit beliefs about nature, reality, human beings, masculinity and femininity, good and evil, which reflect the context of a given historical time and place. Extending Rand's insights, Branden argues further "that at least some of these beliefs tend to reside in every psyche in a given society, and without ever being the subject of explicit awareness" (288-9). There is a strong resiliency and tenacity in one's early beliefs, sense of life, psycho-epistemology and other tacit dimensions of consciousness.

The absorption of dominant cultural trends by a society's individuals should not be viewed as deterministic, as an assault on the concept of free will. Rather, it is an argument for *contextualism*. Given Rand's historical and cultural specificity, I think she did a remarkable job of calling into question virtually the entire substance of the Russian "world-view." And my book pays tribute to her by documenting just how deeply she rejected the premises of Russian culture and politics.

But nobody can question *everything* in their own culture. We are always a part of the culture we critique. In her cultural theory, Rand applies this principle to everyone but herself. If we are to accept what Rand says about the influence of culture on human beings, why must we exempt her from that very formulation?

I have engaged in an empirical investigation with a dose of judicious speculation. I have made observations about Russian culture, Rand's early life, and her system of thought. As an historian, it was incumbent upon me to relate these factors and to present the best explanation I could on the nature of the relationships between them, given the evidence that I had at my disposal. If Rand had been born in sixteenth-century England, or nineteenth-century Germany, or twentieth-century Ethiopia, I would have been just as fascinated by English or German or Ethiopian culture and history in my attempt to grapple with her intellectual legacy. Not because I am a cultural determinist, but because I fundamentally accept Rand's observations about the role of culture in shaping human life - including the life of Ayn Rand.

Hegel once wrote that "No one...can escape the substance of his time any more than he can jump out of his skin" (1985, 112). Of course, Hegel was implying that every individual was but a determined expression of Spirit, a manifestation of a particular moment in the march of the Absolute.⁹ Yet, if viewed less metaphysically, Hegel's dictum might give poetic form to a Randian insight on the tenacity of culture. Rand's radicalism extends to her demand that human beings work ceaselessly to shift what Polanyi has called the "tacit coefficients" of cultural meaning toward greater articulation and, hence, toward greater command over the products of human interaction. But we are not omniscient; we can never gain a synoptic vantage point on culture or history. We are as much the creatures of our context as we are its creators.

My view that Rand absorbed a dialectical sensibility from the "intellectual air" of her Russian youth is, then, entirely consistent with Rand's own cultural theory. The dialectical techniques to which Rand was exposed were employed regularly by Russian thinkers across all disciplines, in literature, social criticism, philosophy, and history. They were a *given*, constituting a dominant paradigm that intellectuals took for granted in all of their literary and theoretical studies. When I refer to "dialectics," in this context, I do *not* mean Soviet "dialectical" materialism, a formulaic historicism that was thoroughly imbued with Marxist ideology. Rand rightly rejected this irrationality. But this is *not* what I mean by "dialectics" - as will soon become apparent.

That my book focuses on the Russian milieu within which Rand matured does not, in any way, diminish the impact of other influences on her life. Some critics are correct to note that *Russian Radical* does not pay enough attention to Rand's debt to Hugo, as Oyerly (1996a) has argued, or even to Rand's Hollywood years, as Shelton (1997) has argued. Indeed, recent discoveries in St. Petersburg indicate that Rand wrote several manuscripts on the American film industry while she studied at the State Institute for Cinema Arts. Her work, *Hollywood: American Movie-City*, was published by the Soviets without her knowledge or permission. She, herself, published a monograph in Leningrad and Moscow on the silent film star *Pola Negri*. I welcome further research into these areas of study. I acknowledge in my book that my own approach is one-sided in its emphasis on Rand's Russian-dialectical roots. Mine is not the only legitimate perspective on Objectivism. There is a need to shift our vantage points on Rand's development, to bring into focus the many facets of her thought.

The Problem of Method

In rejecting my historical thesis, some critics claim that my methodological thesis is undermined as well. But this is entirely incorrect; for even if we disregard my entire historical case, the question remains: Is Rand a dialectical thinker? In my view, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the dialectical interpretation.

The central problem here is a question of definition: What is meant by "dialectics"? Many critics are justifiably concerned about this concept, because it has had a murky history. My next book aims partially to clarify the evolution, meaning, and application of the concept, but it is not possible to address all of the issues within the current limited scope.

David Kelley has argued that my use of "the concept of 'dialectic' is far too imprecise" as a means of "describing the essential elements of Rand's system, or her essential similarities with and differences from other thinkers..." (1996, 11). Caplan (1996) stresses, too, that my use of the "dialectical" genus is incredibly broad, and that it would be hard to come up with any individuals "who are *not* dialectical." Merrill (1995) concurs, since my alleged grouping of Rand, Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, and Lenin under the same rubric "practically establishes a 'prima facie' case that the concept is unconstitutionally vague." Armour (1995) and Brown (1996, 188) also find the use of the concept here, problematic, while Ross (1996, 11) and Bissell (1996, 83) suggest that a more concise genus-differentia definition of dialectic is needed.

Some of the confusion can be traced to different working definitions of "dialectics." Merrill, for instance, equates dialectics with anti-dualism. Lennox goes one step further - he rejects any connection between dialectics and such concepts as "organic unity" and "internal relations" (1996c, 13). For Lennox, I have muddied the waters "with the radical chic of dialectics" (1995, 9), embracing an *au courant* historicist conception that is Hegelian in its origins (1996c).

Lennox seems entirely oblivious to my explicit rejection of historicism. Such historicism is precisely what is *undialectical* in both Hegel and Marx. The analogies that I draw in *Russian Radical*, between Hegel, Marx, and Rand are strictly formal. Any substantive similarities herein emerge from these thinkers' formal commitment to the tracing of relations within a contextually-defined whole.

In my view, both Merrill and Lennox are incorrect to see dialectics as *essentially* the transcendence of dualities and apparent oppositions.

Dialectics is a methodological-research orientation (MRO) whose distinguishing characteristic is an emphasis on contextuality - as applied to the systemic and dynamic relations within a totality (i.e., an organic unity).

What are methodological-research orientations (MROs)? MROs are a classification system that helps us to categorize thinkers according to the implicit or explicit assumptions which they display in their work. By articulating the nature of a dialectical MRO, we can

utilize it as a guide to research questions in the exploration of philosophic, theoretical, and social problems.

Only dialectics can transcend the *a priori* assumptions of such false MRO alternatives as strict atomism and strict organicity, dualism and reductionist monism. But as Aristotle suggests, dialectics is *not* demonstration. It does not assert facts and is not "testable." (It can be validated, but this goes beyond our current scope.) It provides direction to our inquiry and urges us not to treat any issues in isolation, but as part of a wider systemic and dynamic context.

Kelley has objected that my conception of dialectics "cover[s] so many forms of inference and analysis that it no longer denotes any specific school of thought" (1996, 11). But since MROs are broad, they will manifest themselves across disciplinary lines.

In my view, Rand is an exemplary dialectician. In her literary methods, she sees her own novels as "organic wholes" with characters and plot integrated to a central theme expressed in each of its units. For Rand, "A STORY IS AN END IN ITSELF...It is written as a man is born - an organic whole, dictated only by its own laws, and its own necessity - an end in itself, not a means to an end" (1995b, 157). Rand grasps the dialectical necessity to write in "'tiers' or layers of depth" (1995b, 7-8). She notes that in her novels, meaning is contextualized on four interrelated levels of generality - the literal, the connotative, the symbolic, and the emotional (Branden and Branden 1962, 136-40).

Philosophically, Rand refuses to disconnect any branch of philosophy from any other branch or from the totality that they jointly constitute. Each branch is a microcosm of - and a differential vantage point on - the whole. In rejecting every conceivable false alternative, Rand traces the mutual implications and reciprocal interconnections between metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and politics.

In regard to social theory, Rand highlights the internal relationships between and among many disparate factors, from politics and pedagogy to sex, economics, and psychology. Ultimately, she views all social problems - and all social solutions - as preconditions and effects of one another. Her critique is fundamentally transformative; like Marx before her, Rand recognizes the inextricable connections between the personal and the political, the theoretical and the practical.

Noting the essential correctness of my interpretation, Bissell argues that my exposition tends to stress dialectics as a revolt against dualism, but that Objectivism is just as much a foil to monism (1996, 83). I agree. But there are two issues that need to be addressed here: First, Rand is almost always engaged in explicit dichotomy-busting, seeing her resolution as a rejection of false alternatives. My exposition echoes this bias. Second, it must be recognized that no thinker in intellectual history falls into one MRO category or another. Any thinker we analyze will exhibit a predominant MRO tendency, even though each may internalize tensions between different MROs. As I explain in such chapters as "Reason and Emotion" and "History and Resolution," Rand herself occasionally slips into a kind of monism. But many of her successors are working diligently to erase these monistic vestiges from Objectivism.

What makes Rand so revolutionary is that she is one of the few thinkers in the neoliberal tradition to integrate a predominantly dialectical sensibility with a defense of the free society. This is her fundamental contribution to twentieth-century radical social thought.

On the socialist left, Michael Principe disagrees. While Principe (1996) has no problems with my understanding of dialectics, he doubts Rand's dialectical savvy because she paints an oddly "ideological" portrait of the individual (59). But Rand's notions of human nature are no more "ideological" than Marx's notions of human "species-identity." Principe virtually ignores my tri-level model of Rand's social critique, and the enriched, non-atomistic conception of human nature that it implies.

On the libertarian right, Lester Hunt fully grasps my conception of dialectics, but wonders about "the problem with the totality." Hunt suggests, for example, that in viewing things through the lens of internal relations, we may reach unwarranted conclusions about others, based on our differences in, say, aesthetic tastes. For if a person's thinking is an "organic whole," then a single "error" exhibited by that person might lead us to suspect overall problems. Hunt warns us that, in such cases, those with whom we disagree will not be tolerated. For Hunt, this emphasis on "totality" may be anathema to liberty (1996, 55).

In a sense, Hunt echoes the concerns of Karl Popper, for whom there was an identity between methodological totality and political totalitarianism. However, if we engage in context-dropping, jumping to conclusions about individuals based on our cursory knowledge of their aesthetic tastes, then this is *not* illustrative of a dialectical sensibility. Contextuality is essential to dialectics; an understanding of totality must always be contextualized by abstraction and extension of units, level of generality, and vantage point.¹⁰

"The Problem with the Totality" emerges out of the search for a synoptic perspective; it is an expression of what I call "strict organicity." Often, criticisms of "dialectic" are actually critiques of strict organicity. In Plato, Hegel, and Marx, the intermingling of strict organicist and dialectical tendencies was fatal - both in theory and in practice.

With critic Michael Principe (1996, 61), I can humbly affirm that my work is, indeed, centered on the nature of political radicalism. I believe that neoliberals can move toward an appreciation of a radical "sociology" that is not socialist, a "totality" that is not totalitarian. In the process of completing my trilogy, I have learned much from the critics of its second leg - *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*. And to the extent that this book has contributed to an open dialogue on these crucial issues, it has succeeded beyond my wildest expectations.

Endnotes

1. My thanks to Roger Bissell, Murray Franck, Ellen Moore, and Barry Rosenthal for their comments and suggestions along the way. The usual caveats apply.
2. Focusing on the forest does not mean that I am oblivious to some problems in my book that are more on the level of the trees - or the leaves on the trees. Ross (1996) for example, points to some small imprecisions in my presentation of Rand's thoughts on perception and measurement omission. While I take full responsibility for any imprecisions in the exposition, I do not believe that these constitute "glaring errors" or any inability on my part to grasp "the essential characteristics of Rand's account of conceptual thought" (10). In most cases, when viewed against the wider context, the imprecisions disappear. But in other instances, the imprecisions that Ross points to, lie in the Objectivist literature itself. In my role as a journalist of sorts, I report what I find in Rand's writings and lectures - both published and unpublished - and in the writings and lectures of her associates. Some of this material contains conflicting formulations on such topics as the definitions of "concept" and "reason," and the applications of Rand's intrinsic-objective-subjective trichotomy. In any event, I will address my own ambiguous formulations in an appendix to the second edition of *Russian Radical*, when the time comes. It should be noted however, that Ross poses important questions with regard to the definition of "dialectic" - and I address this issue in the body of the current article.
3. I owe the metaphor to Finnish TV journalist, Anna Kaca.
4. Brad Aisa, "David Kelley: Lightning Rod for Rabble," alt.philosophy.objectivism (07 March 1996).
5. Interestingly, Shelton (1997, 227) also discusses the 50th anniversary edition of *Anthem*, "[e]dited by *another* inner-circle member and still-active disciple, Leonard Peikoff..." (emphasis added). This would suggest that Shelton sees me, too, as an "inner-circle...disciple" of Rand, which would be news to me, Peikoff, and Ridpath (whose critique I discuss herein).
6. And I mean no disrespect to Madonna - I enjoyed "Evita," and like dancing to her music.
7. In this regard, I am co-editor, with Mimi Reisel Gladstein, of a forthcoming anthology entitled *Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand* (Penn State Press) that focuses on the parallels and distinctions between Rand and feminism.
8. Hunt (1995) and Bradford (1996) are notable exceptions; both recognize that my detective work on the Rand-Lossky relationship has been significant, even though they disagree in their evaluations of my conclusion.
9. Interestingly, in his study of the history of philosophy, Hegel recognizes the need to examine the original authors directly. By contrast, in political history, "historians are the *fountainheads*, which again have as sources the deeds and sayings of individuals; and the historians who are not original have over and above performed their work at *secondhand*

[emphasis added] (Hegel 1995, 110). I have always found this "Randian" phraseology in Hegel - or is it "Hegelian" phraseology in Rand? - to be most amusing.

10. On these issues, see especially Ollman (1993). Ollman was my doctoral thesis advisor. I believe that neoliberals can profit from his work on method, abstracting it from its Marxist content.

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