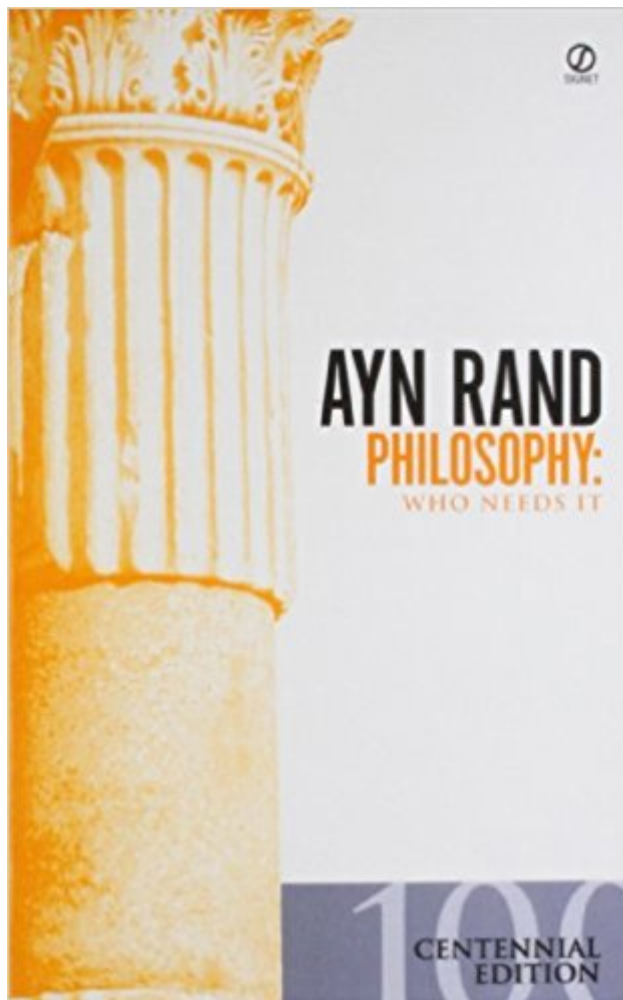


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# Philosophy: Who Needs It



## Synopsis

This collection of essays was the last work planned by Ayn Rand before her death in 1982. In it, she summarizes her view of philosophy and deals with a broad spectrum of topics. According to Ayn Rand, the choice we make is not whether to have a philosophy, but which one to have: rational, conscious, and therefore practical; or contradictory, unidentified, and ultimately lethal. Written with all the clarity and eloquence that have placed Ayn Rand's Objectivist philosophy in the mainstream of American thought, these essays range over such basic issues as education, morality, censorship, and inflation to prove that philosophy is the fundamental force in all our lives.

## Book Information

Mass Market Paperback: 228 pages

Publisher: Signet (November 1984)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0451138937

ISBN-13: 978-0451138934

Product Dimensions: 4.1 x 0.9 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 101 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #306,058 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #88 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Individual Philosophers](#) #410 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Classics](#) #778 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Modern](#)

## Customer Reviews

"Ayn Rand's writings have altered and shaped the lives of millions. This selection of essays is an example of her best." --Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank

"Although this omnibus volume. . . is written for an audience of believers, readers unfamiliar with [Rand's] novels might find it a useful starting point." --Publishers Weekly

For those who want to understand the philosophic implications of our era, this collection by Ayn Rand is an excellent place to begin. --Richmond News-Leader

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--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Born February 2, 1905, Ayn Rand published her first novel, *We the Living*, in 1936. *Anthem* followed

in 1938. It was with the publication of *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) that she achieved her spectacular success. Rand's unique philosophy, Objectivism, has gained a worldwide audience. The fundamentals of her philosophy are put forth in three nonfiction books, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, *The Virtues of Selfishness*, and *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*. They are all available in Signet editions, as is the magnificent statement of her artistic credo, *The Romantic Manifesto*.

On the grounds of originality alone, I can recommend this book to anyone interested in philosophy. What's rather bothersome is the unmerited reputation Rand has received from people who have not read; she deserves a fair shake. Giving Ayn Rand a fair shake means reading at the very least a smattering of her essays, such as the ones entailed here. One of the topics she discusses is, most importantly, her position on where professional/academic philosophy has gone. One might be surprised to find that her complaints about academic philosophy are similar to those of other non-professional philosophers, even those of disparate views from those of Rand's (e.g., Alan Watts and his discussion of professional philosophy being nothing more than playing with words and word analysis, in *"The Tao of Philosophy"*). In this collection of essays, Rand explains her metaphysical framework, explains her qualms with Immanuel Kant's thought, and more. For those wondering what's her reason for her philosophical positions, after having read *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* she gives important discussion and explication of her philosophical views. One intelligent criticism that can and should be brought to this collection of essays is that Rand does not systematically lay out and exposit her philosophy. To some degree, this is understandable on two fronts: she didn't intend to produce a system, at least in this text, but to provide helpful essays to supplement her novels; and because she was not trained as a professional philosopher, only up to the undergraduate level, albeit obviously well educated. On this second point, the trade off with her philosophy is a lack of rigor for the sake of originality. My general recommendation is as follows: For those who enjoy fiction, just read *Atlas Shrugged* and/or *The Fountainhead*. There's little denying that *Atlas Shrugged* is her more popular novel, and it certainly is denser in philosophical content, but *The Fountainhead* is my favorite. For those not wishing to make the commitment to thousands of pages of novel, then I have suggestions

on the basis of what one is looking for: if you want the hardcore philosophy, *The Objectivist Epistemology* is the way to go; if you want a less hardcore, general introduction to her philosophy, read this text, *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, and *For the New Intellectual*.  
Rand's most potent work, arguably as potent as her book on epistemology, is *The Virtue of Selfishness* which some philosophers holding diametrically opposed positions have remarked upon its force. Otherwise, I recommend all of Ayn Rand's texts to anyone want a firm grounding in a philosophy that pertains to the real world, not just the ethereal real of ideas, per se.

One of my favorites of Rand's non-fiction books. It was compiled mostly from her newsletter, *The Ayn Rand Letter*, right before the end of her life and shows her rallying yet again to present her thoughts in a very clear and concise overview of, "the supremacy of reason". I particularly like chapter 4, "The Missing Link" about the anti-conceptual mentality and it's roots. And chapter 7, "Faith and Force: The Destroyers of the Modern World". Also chapter 13, "The Stimulus and the Response" about "Beyond Freedom and Dignity" by BF Skinner who was declared the world's leading intellectual influence during my public high school education, most unfortunately, while Rand herself was banished. Rand's clarity of mind, precision with concepts, and specific use of words is extraordinarily sharp here as she debunks one philosophical fallacy after another. She's highly consistent throughout this book as she addresses many of the fundamental moral issues that still remained with regard to a better understanding of her Objectivist philosophy. This' her last and final appraisal of our culture and it also shows her elaborating her essential arguments on what she still considered the most important issues.

After reading *Atlas Shrugged* and finding an author and philosophy that fit my personal morality and basic premises of thought - I needed to know and understand more. Ayn Rand is putting a technical understanding to my way of life and thinking... It is very refreshing and inspiring to find such eloquent explanations and theory to a system that I had simply assumed because it felt right. Without the technical foundation, I frequently come to the same conclusions and ends, but the journey has been more difficult. I feel like her life study of putting together her philosophy of Objectivism is helping to clarify my own thoughts and reasoning - so that the path of my journey is being clarified. It is also an excellent lesson that gives me a better way to express my core logic and thoughts to others more effectively - hopefully to combat the many issues we are facing today!

A long work full of insightful essays regarding the crucial import of philosophy to the everyday lives of every individual. From denouncing all of the altruist-collectivist philosophers from Plato to Kant and beyond, to describing the values that Objectivism brings to the lives of every rational individual who embraces it, Rand makes bold statement after bold statement and supports her positions with principled, logical, and concise arguments against the irrationalist philosophies and for her rational philosophy of self-interest, Objectivism.

At first glance the reader may believe the title is a question, but in fact is a statement. In *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, Ayn Rand sets out to educate the reader on who needs philosophy and why they need it. This book is very informative and having finished, I now have a solid understanding of the importance of philosophy and the impact of philosophy on the life of each individual. As a collection of essays which addresses hot button issues at the time of the writing, I find it intriguing how these same issues are relevant to this day. Upon further reflection, this may further reinforce Rand's point about the importance of philosophy to the individual.

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