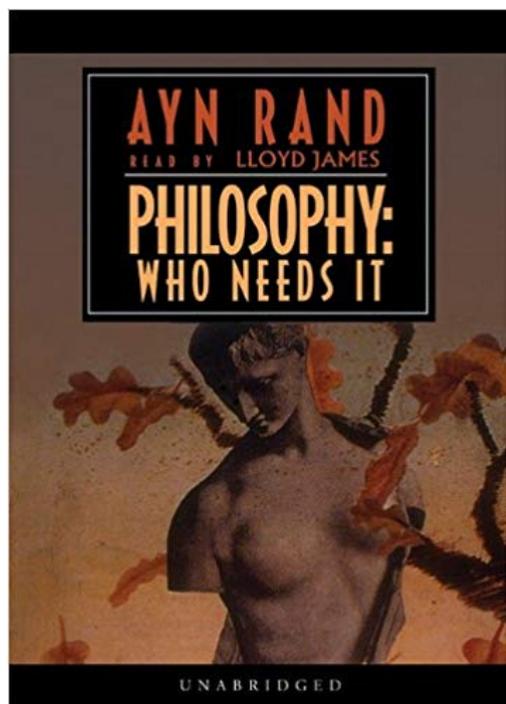


Philosophy: Who Needs It *by* Lloyd James,Ayn Rand



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Who needs philosophy? Ayn Rand's answer: Everyone. 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 Rand, the choice we make is not whether to have a philosophy but which one to have: a rational, conscious, and therefore practical one, or a contradictory, unidentified, and ultimately lethal one. Written with all the clarity and eloquence that have placed Ayn Rand's Objectivist philosophy in the mainstream of American thought, these essays address such basic issues as education, morality, censorship, and inflation to prove that philosophy is the fundamental force in all our lives.



Reviews of the **Philosophy: Who Needs It** *by* Lloyd James,Ayn Rand

Keel

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 Rand's 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 Rand's 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" 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.

Goktilar

This is the best starting point if you want to understand Objectivism. I do not agree with everything Ayn Rand ever said, but I do agree with a lot of it. I studied her philosophy for a number of years and researched many of her critics--of which there is no shortage. I have never found a legitimate argument against her philosophical ideas. I do not agree with her on the death penalty or gay marriage, but those topics are not something she spent much time convincing people of because it was more of an opinion than a search for or discovery of truth. The only counterpoints I have seen on her philosophy were bogus--they were all arguing with straw men and patting themselves on the back for being so clever. There are three camps of Ayn Rand critics: those who haven't understood her, ad hominem, and those who are simply wrong. Nathaniel Branden's criticism of Objectivism wasn't released until 1984 almost two years after her death. I think it's because he knew she would have taken his lunch money and gave him a wedgie. If I can refute every point he made with ease, she would have made it look like an art form.

I think some people are intimidated by her staunch rationality, her black and white thinking. Ayn Rand's writing perspective (her voice) is very strong: some folks take it to mean "I am right and you are wrong!" She was a severe rationalist, so people more attuned to their feelings and emotions will have more trouble accepting her ideas; while fellow rationalists will absorb it and relate far more

readily.

Here's a free one: she never said to repress emotions. She said they are not good indicators for making choices. Of course if you're deciding what color bridesmaid dresses to get for your wedding, go ahead and think about it with your emotions--I'm sure green does make you FEEL different than brown. However, if you are investing in a company or signing a congressional act into law, for god-sake, don't let it be swayed by the color of the logo or how it makes you feel--it should be an act of the rational mind weighing all the concretes.

If you read this book with the intent of acquiring knowledge, you will not be disappointed. There are not many books I can point to and sincerely say that it "changed my life," but this is one of them.

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