Ayn Rand

**Ayn Rand** *(born Alisa Zinov'yevna Rosenbaum; February 2, 1905 – March 6, 1982)* was a Russian-American novelist, philosopher, playwright, and screenwriter. She is known for her two best-selling novels, [The Fountainhead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fountainhead) and [Atlas Shrugged](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas_Shrugged), and for developing a philosophical system she called [Objectivism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objectivism_(Ayn_Rand)). Born and educated in Russia, Rand moved to the United States in 1926. She had a play produced on Broadway in 1935–1936. After two early novels that were initially unsuccessful in America, she achieved fame with her 1943 novel, The Fountainhead.



In 1957, she published her best-known work, the novel Atlas Shrugged. Afterward, she turned to non-fiction to promote her philosophy, publishing her own magazines and releasing several collections of essays until her death in 1982. Rand advocated reason as the only means of acquiring knowledge and rejected faith and religion. She supported [rational](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational_egoism) and [ethical egoism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical_egoism), and rejected [altruism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altruism_(ethics)). In politics, she condemned the [initiation of force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Initiation_of_force) as immoral and opposed [collectivism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivism) and [statism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statism" \o "Statism) as well as [anarchism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism), instead supporting [laissez-faire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laissez-faire) [capitalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism), which she defined as the system based on recognizing [individual rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individual_rights). In art, Rand promoted [romantic realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romantic_realism). She was sharply critical of most philosophers and philosophical traditions known to her, except for some [Aristotelians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotelianism) and [classical liberals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_liberals).

Literary critics received Rand's fiction with mixed reviews, and academia generally ignored or rejected her philosophy, though academic interest has increased in recent decades. The Objectivist movement attempts to spread her ideas, both to the public and in academic settings. She has been a significant influence among [libertarians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarians) and [American conservatives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservatism_in_the_United_States).

# Selected works

### Novels

* 1936 [We the Living](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_the_Living)
* 1943 [The Fountainhead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fountainhead)
* 1957 [Atlas Shrugged](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas_Shrugged)

### Other fiction

* 1934 [Night of January 16th](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_of_January_16th)
* 1938 [Anthem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthem_(novella))

### Non-fiction

* 1961 [For the New Intellectual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_the_New_Intellectual)
* 1964 [The Virtue of Selfishness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Virtue_of_Selfishness)
* 1966 [Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism:_The_Unknown_Ideal)
* 1969 [The Romantic Manifesto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Romantic_Manifesto)
* 1971 [The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Left:_The_Anti-Industrial_Revolution)
* 1979 [Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction_to_Objectivist_Epistemology)
* 1982 [Philosophy: Who Needs It](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy:_Who_Needs_It)

# Philosophy

Rand called her philosophy "Objectivism", describing its essence as "the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute." She considered Objectivism a [systematic philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systematic_philosophy) and laid out positions on [metaphysics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics), [epistemology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology), [ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics), [political philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_philosophy) and [aesthetics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics).

In metaphysics, Rand supported [philosophical realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophical_realism), and opposed anything she regarded as mysticism or supernaturalism, including all forms of religion.[[106]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand#cite_note-106) In [epistemology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology), she considered all knowledge to be based on sense perception, the validity of which she considered [axiomatic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axiom), and [reason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reason), which she described as "the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by man's senses." She rejected all claims of non-perceptual or [a priori](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_priori_and_a_posteriori) knowledge, including "'instinct,' 'intuition,' 'revelation,' or any form of 'just knowing.'" In her [Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction_to_Objectivist_Epistemology), Rand presented a theory of concept formation and rejected the [analytic–synthetic dichotomy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analytic%E2%80%93synthetic_dichotomy).

In ethics, Rand argued for [rational](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational_egoism) and [ethical egoism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical_egoism) (rational self-interest), as the guiding moral principle. She said the individual should "exist for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself." She referred to egoism as "the virtue of selfishness" in her [book of that title](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Virtue_of_Selfishness), in which she presented her solution to the [is-ought problem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Is-ought_problem) by describing a [meta-ethical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meta-ethical) theory that based morality in the needs of "man's survival qua man". She condemned ethical altruism as incompatible with the requirements of human life and happiness, and held that the [initiation of force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Initiation_of_force) was evil and irrational, writing in Atlas Shrugged that "Force and mind are opposites."

Rand's political philosophy emphasized [individual rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individual_rights) (including [property rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_property)), and she considered [laissez-faire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laissez-faire) [capitalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism) the only moral social system because in her view it was the only system based on the protection of those rights. She opposed [statism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statism" \o "Statism), which she understood to include [theocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theocracy), [absolute monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_monarchy), [Nazism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazism), [fascism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism), [communism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism), [democratic socialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_socialism), and [dictatorship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictatorship). Rand believed that rights should be enforced by a constitutionally limited government. Although her political views are often classified as [conservative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservatism_in_the_United_States) or [libertarian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian), she preferred the term "radical for capitalism". She worked with conservatives on political projects, but disagreed with them over issues such as religion and ethics. She denounced libertarianism, which she associated with [anarchism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism). She rejected anarchism as a naïve theory based in [subjectivism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subjectivism) that could only lead to collectivism in practice.

# Popular interest

In 1991, a survey conducted for the [Library of Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Congress) and the [Book-of-the-Month Club](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book-of-the-Month_Club) asked club members what the most influential book in the respondent's life was. Rand's Atlas Shrugged was the second most popular choice, after the [Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible). Rand's books continue to be widely sold and read, with over 29 million copies sold as of 2013 (with about 10% of that total purchased for free distribution to schools by the [Ayn Rand Institute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand_Institute)). Although Rand's influence has been greatest in the United States, there has been international interest in her work. Rand's work continues to be among the top sellers among books in India.

Rand's contemporary admirers included fellow novelists, such as [Ira Levin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ira_Levin), [Kay Nolte Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kay_Nolte_Smith) and [L. Neil Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._Neil_Smith), and later writers such as [Erika Holzer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erika_Holzer) and [Terry Goodkind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Goodkind) have been influenced by her. Other artists who have cited Rand as an important influence on their lives and thought include [comic book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comic_book) artist [Steve Ditko](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Ditko) and musician [Neil Peart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neil_Peart) of [Rush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rush_(band)). Rand provided a positive view of business, and in response business executives and entrepreneurs have admired and promoted her work. [John Allison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_A._Allison_IV) of BB&T and [Ed Snider](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed_Snider) of Comcast Spectacor have funded the promotion of Rand's ideas, while [Mark Cuban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Cuban), owner of the Dallas Mavericks, and [John P. Mackey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_P._Mackey), CEO of Whole Foods, among others, have said they consider Rand crucial to their success.

Rand and her works have been referred to in a variety of media: on television shows including animated sitcoms, live-action comedies, dramas, and game shows, as well as in movies and video games. She, or characters based on her, figure prominently (in positive and negative lights) in literary and science fiction novels by prominent American authors. [Nick Gillespie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Gillespie), editor in chief of [Reason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reason_(magazine)), has remarked that "Rand's is a tortured immortality, one in which she's as likely to be a punch line as a protagonist..." and that "jibes at Rand as cold and inhuman, run through the popular culture". Two movies have been made about Rand's life. A 1997 documentary film, [Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand:_A_Sense_of_Life), was nominated for the [Academy Award for Documentary Feature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Award_for_Documentary_Feature). [The Passion of Ayn Rand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Passion_of_Ayn_Rand_(film)), a 1999 television adaptation of the [book of the same name](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Passion_of_Ayn_Rand_(book)), won several awards. Rand's image also appears on a [U.S. postage stamp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postage_stamps_and_postal_history_of_the_United_States) designed by artist [Nick Gaetano](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Gaetano).