

ATLAS SHRUGGED

AYN RAND



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To Frank O'Connor

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Ayn Rand held that art is a "re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value judgments." By its nature, therefore, a novel (like a statue or a symphony) does not require or tolerate an explanatory preface; it is a self-contained universe, aloof from commentary, beckoning the reader to enter, perceive, respond.

Ayn Rand would never have approved of a didactic (or laudatory) introduction to her book, and I have no intention of flouting her wishes. Instead, I am going to give her the floor. I am going to let you in on some of the thinking she did as she was preparing to write *Atlas Shrugged*.

Before starting a novel, Ayn Rand wrote voluminously in her journals about its theme, plot, and characters. She wrote not for any audience, but strictly for herself—that is, for the clarity of her own understanding. The journals dealing with *Atlas Shrugged* are powerful examples of her mind in action, confident even when groping, purposeful even when stymied, luminously eloquent even though wholly unedited. These journals are also a fascinating record of the step-by-step birth of an immortal work of art.

In due course, all of Ayn Rand's writings will be published. For this 35th anniversary edition of *Atlas Shrugged*, however, I have selected, as a kind of advance bonus for her fans, four typical journal entries. Let me warn new readers that the passages reveal the plot and will spoil the book for anyone who reads them before knowing the story.

As I recall, "Atlas Shrugged" did not become the novel's title until Miss Rand's husband made the suggestion in 1956. The working title throughout the writing was "The Strike."

The earliest of Miss Rand's notes for "The Strike" are dated January 1, 1945, about a year after the publication of *The Fountainhead*. Naturally enough, the subject on her mind was how to differentiate the present novel from its predecessor.

Theme. What happens to the world when the Prime Movers go on strike.

This means—a picture of the world with its motor cut off. Show: what, how, why. The specific steps and incidents—in terms of persons, their spirits, motives, psychology and ac-