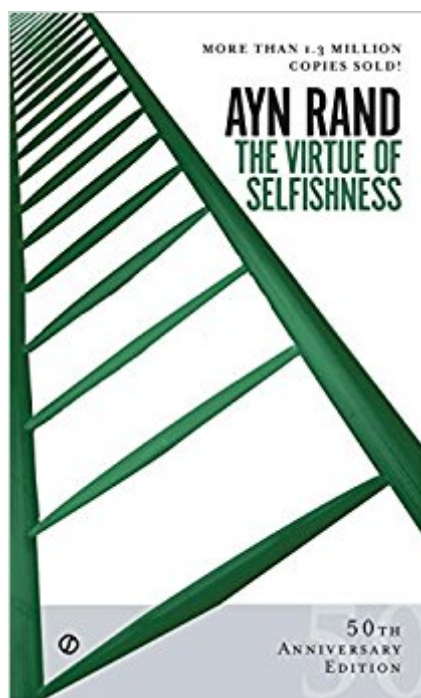


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# The Virtue Of Selfishness: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition



## Synopsis

A collection of essays that sets forth the moral principles of Objectivism, Ayn Rand's controversial, groundbreaking philosophy. Since their initial publication, Rand's fictional works—Anthem, The Fountainhead, and Atlas Shrugged—have had a major impact on the intellectual scene. The underlying theme of her famous novels is her philosophy, a new morality—the ethics of rational self-interest—that offers a robust challenge to altruist-collectivist thought. Known as Objectivism, her divisive philosophy holds human life—the life proper to a rational being—as the standard of moral values and regards altruism as incompatible with man's nature. In this series of essays, Rand asks why man needs morality in the first place, and arrives at an answer that redefines a new code of ethics based on the virtue of selfishness. More Than 1 Million Copies Sold!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The problem with Rand is easily detectable by careful listeners of this production: a good essayist with a flair for the dramatic turn of phrase, she wasted her obvious writing skills in an effort to support outlandish personal opinions cloaked in the guise of logic. An absolutist thinker, she devotes one whole essay to an effort to persuade us that we really should see things as black and white, with no shades of gray. Born in Soviet Russia, Rand so despised socialism and collectivist thinking that she leapt to the furthest extreme possible to become the champion of unbridled capitalism, the rights of the individual at the expense of the community, and the diminution of all regulation by the state, with the exception of a judicial system and the control of crime. Among the

sadly dated ideas she conveys are the attitude that homosexuals are mutant symptoms of a sick society and the belief that anyone with an interest in internationalism is a "one world" proponent. To use one of her own favored words, Rand's political and social philosophy is critically "muddled." C.M. Herbert's voice is efficient and cold, making it a perfect choice for the narration of this author's work. Recommended only as documentation of an anomaly in the history of ideas. Mark Pumphrey, Polk Cty. P.L., Columbus, NC Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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*.

To be candid I am not a fan of Ayn Rand and I really do not respect her worldview. However, just as she was frustrated during her lifetime by people who formed opinions of her without ever having read her works, I do agree with that viewpoint and therefore have read her works, even the stuff she wrote for Harper's. This book is ostensibly a collection of writings from the objectivist newsletter which she self published for many years. It also has a very to the point preface which I feel is important when understanding exactly how she viewed the differences between the words altruism and selfishness, because in the preface she makes it very clear that they are mutually exclusive concepts. Whether or not you buy into her version of utopian society, I feel that there is value in doing it in an informed manner. If you don't want to read her fiction, but at least want to have an educated understanding of her worldview, this is the thing to read.

This collection of essays was not written as a justification for individuals to selfishly rape and pillage. On the contrary. Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden merely argue that one is entitled to his own life, the pursuit of his own happiness and to the accumulation of property through productive activity and voluntary exchange in the free market. The authors argue that one must pursue selfish interest with full respect for the rights of others to do the same. Don't let the title of the book scare you. In Rand's own words: "The title of this book may evoke the kind of question that I hear once in a while: 'Why do

you use the word 'selfishness' to denote virtuous qualities of character, when that word antagonizes so many people to whom it does not mean the things you mean?' To those who ask it, my answer is: 'For the reason that makes you afraid of it.'" I highly recommend this book. Excellent work.

The headline is for shock value. In the first chapter she defines "Selfishness" after reading her definition I think most people would agree that they are selfish. Each chapter is an easy read and there are some notable chapters like the one on "racism". Her condemnation of Racism is excellent and I think that everyone of every race should read this chapter and practice her advice on respecting the individual. I marvel that Ayn Rand had such foresight that in the 1960's she was able to see where the welfare state would take us. The chapters on compromise and lack of moral clarity are also very informative. I highly recommend this book.

One of Ayn Rand's most important works. It is a great, quick, read that explains one of the most important points of her Objectivist philosophy. A must have!

There are nineteen articles in this volume, fourteen by Rand and five by Nathaniel Branden. The longest is "The Objectivist Ethics," in which Rand explains her philosophy of "Rational Self Interest." The remaining articles are examples of the application of this philosophy. Rand contends that "that which furthers (a living being's) life is the good, that which threatens it is the evil." Thus the basic human value is "rational selfishness...the value required for man's survival." How do people determine if something is "good or evil"? If the person experiences pleasure, it is a signal that the experience is "good" and that the person is acting properly. If the individual has pain, the feeling shows that the experience is "bad." People understand these sensations by using their intelligence, by thinking. Since people are not born with intelligence, they must study about the world and how to think well so that they can live properly. There are two essentials for survival: thinking and productive work. A person who tries to survive without thinking is no better than an animal. Productive work is the way people sustain themselves, getting food, adequate comfort, and time for study and self improvement. The work should be "the fullest and most purposeful use of the mind." Living by her agenda results in a feeling of pride, the realization that one has achieved the best that one can achieve. This achievement is selfish. The individual is interested in himself, his own life, and not the life of another or of society. The individual deals with others only when he wants to do so, without constraints or directives, unforced, in an exchange that "benefits both parties by their own independent judgment." Society is good when it gives individuals the two things necessary for

human existence: knowledge and trade. "The only proper, moral purpose of a government is to protect man's rights." Since a person's life is the top value, how should a person act in the following examples? 1. Should a man save his wife who he loves and feels that he can't live without or twenty strangers? The wife because she is dear to him. 2. Should a man act courageously and take an unreasonable chance to save another person's life? No, his life comes first. 3. Should people devote their lives to help the poor rise from poverty? No, he should devote himself to his own concerns, his life. 4. Is faith and self sacrifice for others correct? No, they are the cause of all evil and the deterioration of humanity. There are three problems with this volume. First, it is very repetitious. Rand's philosophy is contained in the first chapter and the book presents nothing new after it. It only rehashes the message and applies it to various situations. Second, Rand bases her philosophy on ethics, an amorphous subject that many scholars correctly feel is very subjective. She would have done much better to base her ideas upon reality, upon what is "true and false," upon the nature of people and the laws of nature. The result is the same, but the presentation would be clearer. Third, many philosophers would agree that the basic human nature, that which distinguishes them from animals and inanimate objects is their intelligence, and that, as Rand contends, being altruistic is not an inherent part of a human being. Yet, as Aristotle pointed out, man is a social animal, he must live with and interact with people to survive. Thus helping others is necessary, at least to some extent. Rand ignores this when she insists that altruism is evil.

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