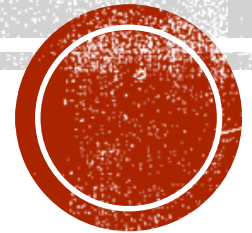


# PHILOSOPHY: WHO NEEDS IT?

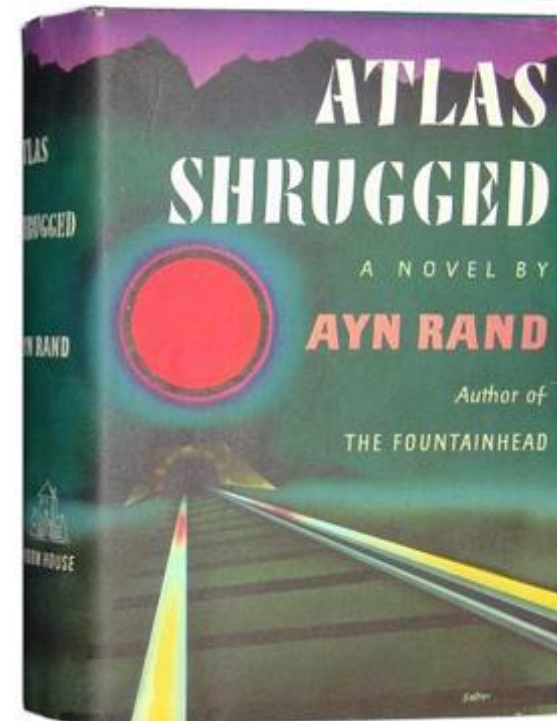
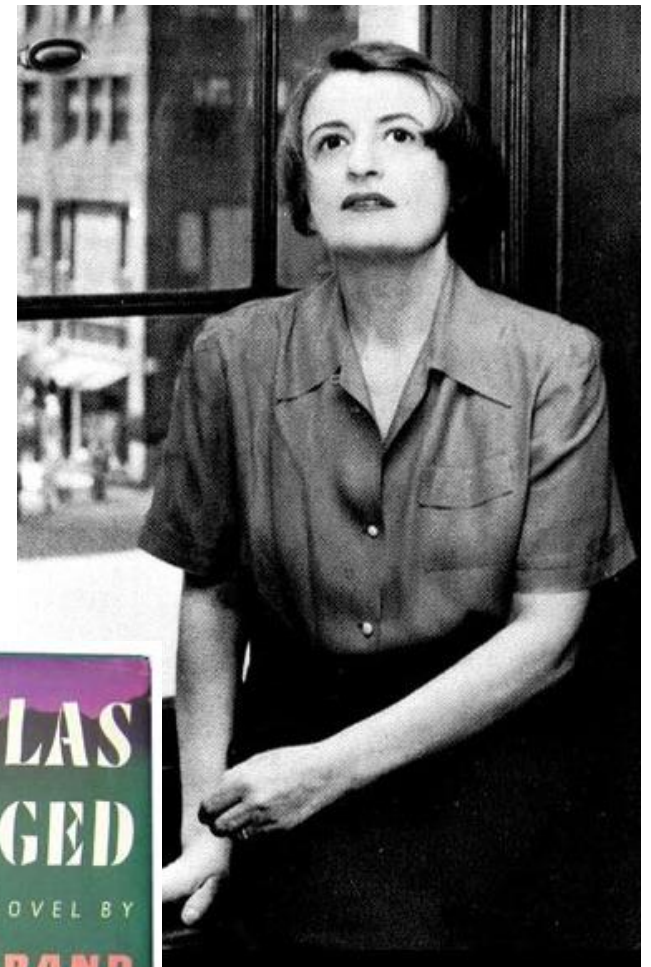
Part 1

The Value and Importance of Philosophy



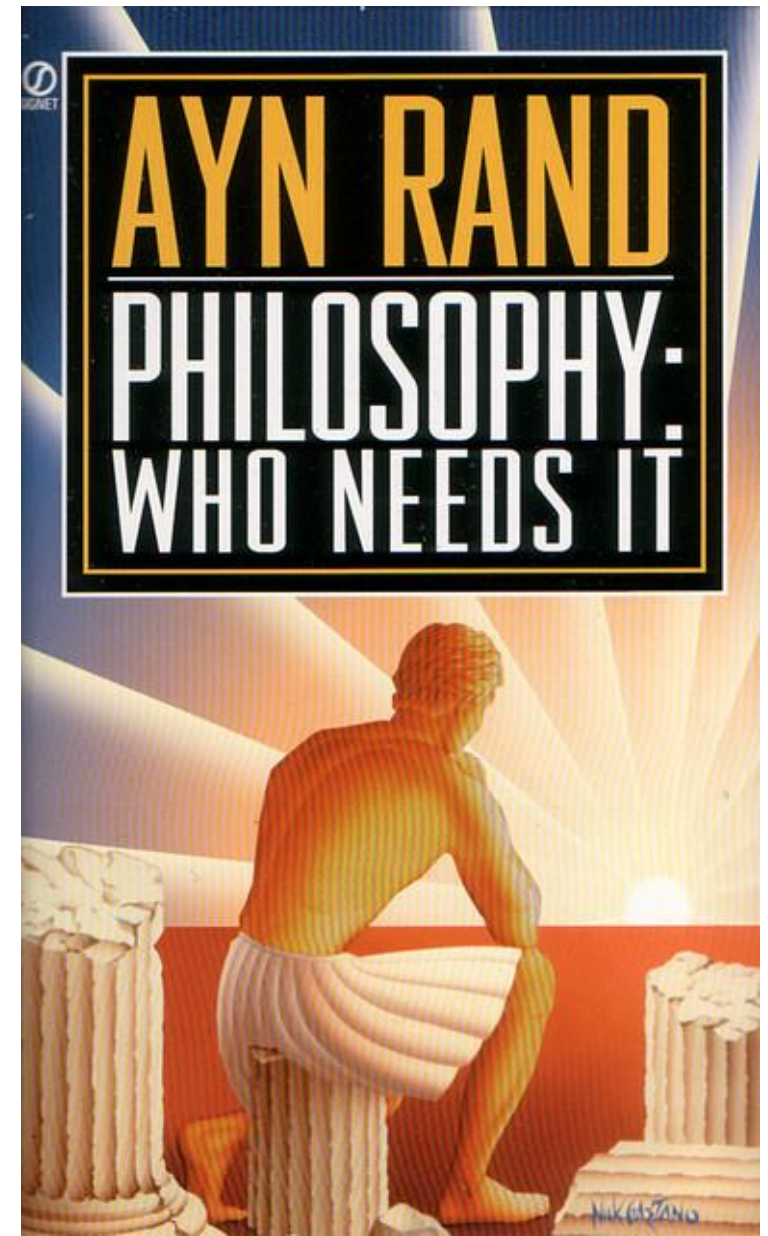
# AYN RAND

- 20<sup>th</sup> Century American novelist-philosopher (1905-1982)
- Born in Russia; emigrated in 1926
- Not an 'academic'
- Famous works:
  - *Anthem* (1938 (UK)/1946 (US))
  - *The Fountainhead* (1945)
  - *Atlas Shrugged* (1957)



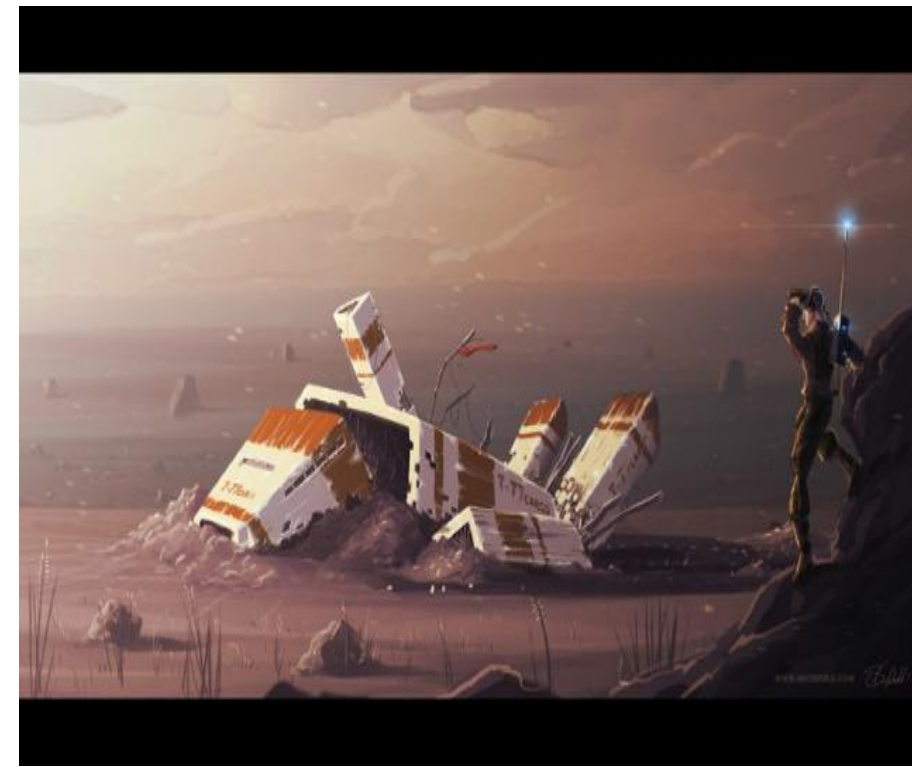
# PHILOSOPHY: WHO NEEDS IT?

- Talk at West Point, US Military Academy in 1974.
- Focus: the importance of philosophy
- Not: eh, who needs that!
- Who Needs It? You do.



# SHORT STORY

- Rand starts with a short (very short) story about an astronaut. Why?
  - She's a fiction writer; something deeper?
- What is the astronaut's situation?
  - Crashes on alien planet
  - Trapped; unsure how to react/deal
- Faces a situation where he needs to address three questions:
  - Where am I?
  - How can I discover it?
  - What should I do?
- Astronaut evades these questions. The Result?
- “never heard from again”



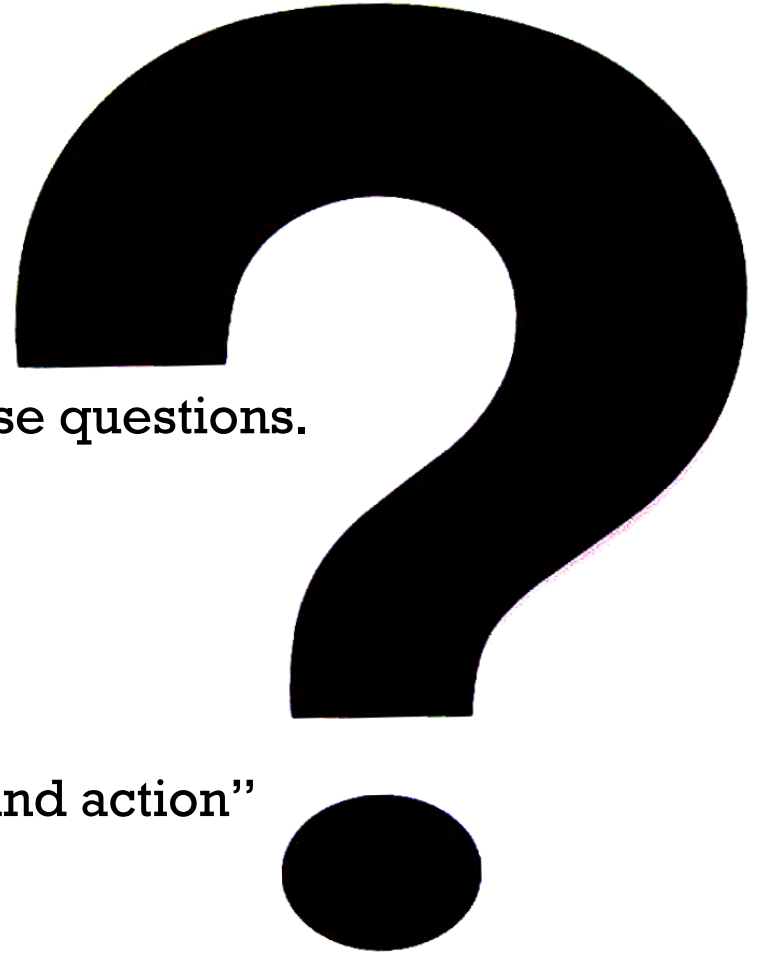
Source: <http://digital-art-gallery.com/picture/15260>





# THE THREE QUESTIONS

- We all face the same situation: need to answer these questions.
- Questions:
  - Where am I?
  - How can I know it?
  - What should I do?
- Answers: “underlie man’s every thought, feeling and action”
- Philosophy is the only way to answer them.



# QUESTIONS → PHILOSOPHY

- Where am I? → What kind of existence is this?
  - Metaphysics
  - The study of the ultimate nature of reality
  - Focus: properties, characteristics of any thing that exists
- How do I know it?
  - Epistemology
  - The study of knowledge
  - Focus: nature of knowledge; what justifies it; certainty;
- What should I do?
  - Ethics/Politics
  - The study of the code of values that guide our choices and actions
  - Focus: right/wrong; good/bad; virtues/values;



Source: <http://www.the-universe.ie/>



# PHILOSOPHY: WHO NEEDS IT?

Part 2

The Value and Importance of Philosophy



# PHILOSOPHY AND EVERYTHING ELSE

- Three questions:
  - Where am I?
  - How can I know it?
  - What should I do?
- What makes philosophy different?
- Religion:
  - Basis for answering
    - Religion: faith/revelation
    - Philosophy: reason, logic, evidence





# PHILOSOPHY AND S

- Philosophy: more fundamental/basic
- Science: specialized focus
- Science: seeks causal explanations
- Philosophy: asks what is 'cause'?



**Existential Comics**

@existentialcoms

"Why does philosophy matter?"

"I don't know, why does science matter?"

"Well because scie-"

"Annnnnnnnd you are doing philosophy."

8/4/15, 7:42 PM

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549 RETWEETS 636 FAVORITES

science/



# BACK TO THE ASTRONAUT...

- Why does he end up lost forever?
- He refuses to answer these questions.
- What happens when we evade these questions?
- Death seems unlikely.
- Self-Doubt/Anxiety



# SELF-DOUBT

performed.

You have no choice about the necessity to integrate your observations, your experiences, your knowledge into abstract ideas, i.e., into principles. Your only choice is whether these principles are true or false, whether they represent your conscious, rational conviction--or a grab-bag of notions snatched at random, whose sources, validity, context and consequences you do not know, notions which, more often than not, you would drop like a hot potato if you knew.

But the principles you accept (consciously or subconsciously) may clash with or contradict one another; they, too, have to be integrated. What integrates them? Philosophy. A philosophic system is an integrated view of existence. As a human being, you have no choice about the fact that you need a philosophy. Your only choice is whether you define your philosophy by a conscious, rational, disciplined process of thought and scrupulously logical deliberation--or let your subconscious accumulate a junk heap of unwarranted conclusions, false generalizations, undefined contradictions, undigested slogans, unidentified wishes, doubts and fears, thrown together by chance, but integrated by your subconscious into a kind of mongrel philosophy and fused into a single, solid weight: *self-doubt*, like a ball and chain in the place where your mind's wings should have grown.

You might say, as many people do, that it is not easy always to act on abstract principles. No, it is not easy. But how much harder is it, to have to act on them without knowing what they are?

Your subconscious is like a computer, more complex a computer than man can build, and its



# ANXIETY AND ESCAPISM

Emotions are not tools of cognition. The men who are not interested in philosophy need it most urgently: they are most helplessly in its power.

The men who are not interested in philosophy absorb its principles from the cultural atmosphere around them--from schools, colleges, books, magazines, newspapers, movies, television, etc. Who sets the tone of a culture? A small handful of men: the philosophers. Others follow their lead, either by conviction or by default. For some two hundred years, under the influence of Immanuel Kant, the dominant trend of philosophy has been directed to a single goal: the destruction of man's mind, of his confidence in the power of reason. Today, we are seeing the climax of that trend.

When men abandon reason, they find not only that their emotions cannot guide them, but that they can experience no emotions save one: terror. The spread of drug addiction among young people brought up on today's intellectual fashions, demonstrates the unbearable inner state of men who are deprived of their means of cognition and who seek escape from reality--from the terror of their impotence to deal with existence. Observe these young people's dread of independence and their frantic desire to "belong," to attach themselves to some group, clique or gang. Most of them have never heard of philosophy, but they sense that they need some fundamental answers to questions they dare not ask--and they hope that the tribe will tell them *how to live*. They are ready to be taken over by any witch doctor, guru, or dictator. One of the most dangerous things a man can do is to surrender his *moral* autonomy to others: like the astronaut in my story, he does not know whether they are human, even though they walk on



# BACK TO THE ASTRONAUT...

- Why does he end up lost forever?
- He refuses to answer these questions.
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# SURRENDER OF AUTONOMY

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Now you may ask: If philosophy can be that evil, why should one study it? Particularly, why should one study the philosophical theories which are blatantly false, make no sense, and bear no relation to real life?

My answer is: In self-protection--and in defense of truth, justice, freedom, and any value you ever held or may ever hold.

Not all philosophies are evil, though too many of them are, particularly in modern history. On



# SO WHO NEEDS PHILOSOPHY?

- Everyone!
- Why?
- “In order to be able to deal with concrete, particular, real-life problems—i.e., in order to be able to live on earth.”
- Everyone has a ‘philosophy’ already.
  - Rush: “If you choose not to decide you still have made a choice”
- We have ready-made answers; but don’t know if they are the right ones.
- But not getting them right can have dire consequences so:
- Philosophy teaches us to examine these questions and seek out better answers.

