

Book Review**Review of Ayn Rand's Book: Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology: Expanded Second Edition**Stephen P. Smith^{*}**ABSTRACT**

According to Rand's objectivism, deduction, induction, and concept-formation are all that is needed to acquire objective knowledge. Rand's "concept-formation" is to first differentiate (or particularize) a set into units and then to integrate (or generalize) over the set. Rand (1990, page 28) limits concepts to a bi-polarity and writes: "The process of observing the facts of reality and of integrating them into concepts is, in essence, a process of induction. The process of subsuming new instances under a known concept is, in essence, a process of deduction." Rand correctly connects induction and deduction with the proclivities of generality and particularity, respectively, but in doing this she turns concept-formation into an empty bi-polarity that holds nothing else but induction and deduction. You can find this book at Amazon http://www.amazon.com/Introduction-Objectivist-Epistemology-Expanded-Second/dp/0452010306/ref=cm_cr-mr-title .

Key Words: objectivist, epistemology, deduction, induction, concept formation.

My grading of Ayn Rand's "Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology" shows a bi-polarity: a-priori and upon analytic insight it is only worth one star and should be avoided by the vulnerable that might find their intellect injured by reading it; a-posterior and upon empirical insight it is possible to correct Rand's objectivism and return logic to an intuitionism that is worth five stars to any reader that is able to understand the corrections.

I am an optimist, and so I give this very dangerous book four stars; but by subtracting one star note that you have been warned!

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Rand's Chapter 8 puts a great deal of emphasis on the "Law of Identity," and something must be said about this. This law is only vaguely formulated if you check with the literature. Nevertheless, the Law of Identity is considered a law of thought, and is typically stipulated as a prelude to deductive logic. It is sometimes presented as a tautology, which says something to the affect that proposition A equals proposition A, or $A=A$ for short. As a tautology that applies to grammar and logic, the fact that $A=A$, is very unilluminating. I can only guess that Rand uses this tautology because it enforces a type of literalism that applies when concepts are used in language and in logic. This seems to be an okay

Correspondence: Stephen P. Smith, Ph.D., Visiting Scientist, Physics Department, University Of California at Davis, CA
E-mail: hucklebird@aol.com

convention. However, I don't believe we can assume that objectivism is pristine enough for such enforcement, and so the use of this law is on very thin ice.

Note the duplicity in Leonard Piekoff's contribution in the same book (pages 88-121), where departure from the Law of Identity is blamed for Kant's analytic-synthetic dichotomy. However, in passing judgment, Piekoff changed the meaning of the Law of Identity given as the simple tautology that merely resides in abstract thought. Piekoff (page 99) writes: "The fact that certain characteristics are, at a given time, unknown to man, does not indicate that these characteristics are excluded from the entity - or from the concept. A is A; existents are what they are, independent of the state of human knowledge; and a concept means the existents which it integrates. Thus, a concept subsumes and includes all the characteristics of its referents, known and not-yet-known."

We discover that the Law of Identity is meant to apply to the bi-polarity offered by concepts! This can only mean that the Law of Identity underwrites the most significant synthetic that is the giver of all pristine facts, represented by the time-sense polarity: {analytic a-priori <> empirical a-posteriori}! If a concept emerges from the polarity and comes with an utterance that asserts that $A=A$, we know automatically that the middle-term that unites the polarity's left-hand side and right-hand side is found undeclared by the utterance. Mere tautology that asserts that "concept is concept" is only wallpaper and comes nowhere close to declaring the middle-term that holds the polarity together, and it gives us no license to take the middle-term for granted. In other words, the middle-term that holds all concepts together is found undeclared by objectivism. The Law of Identity is used as an excuse to enforce a brand of circular reasoning that will evade any mention of this weakness. I ask the question: what is it? The objectivist answers: it is what it is!

Objectivism is found unable to avoid Kant's dualism, but I agree with Piekoff that this dualism is unnecessary. To find a hint of what the middle-term might be, note that Piekoff's (page 113) writes this about the dichotomy: "To introduce an opposition between the logical and the factual is to create a split between consciousness and existence, between truths in accordance with man's method of cognition and truths in accordance with the facts of reality. The result of such a dichotomy is that logic is divorced from reality (logical truths are empty and conventional) - and reality becomes unknowable (factual truths are contingent and uncertain). This amounts to the claim that man has no method of cognition, i.e., no way of acquiring knowledge."

We may conclude that the undeclared middle-term fills in the noted gap not filled by objectivism, and this act of filling is needed for cognition and knowledge! Yet Rand (page 87) writes, "The motive of all the attacks on man's rational faculty, is a single basic premise: the desire to exempt consciousness from the law of identity." The best she can do to defend her covert circular reasoning offered by objectivism is to point to "attacks" and "desire." Rand spent her life defending rationalism from the likes of collectivists, from Kant, from altruism, and from mysticism, and this effort was made by an objectivism that concealed its own circularity. At best she can only offer her emotions for acting the way she did, and that is the key to the undeclared middle-term that mystics have no trouble understanding.

The synthesis of deduction and induction that is necessary for Rand's concept-formation shows reciprocity in the best tradition of Taoism, and it reveals naked emotionality! Revealed emotion informs on the middle-term that holds the bi-polar concepts together permitting the passing of objectivism over to intuitionism.

Yes, it is true, words are concepts that emerge from concept-formation as indicated by objectivism. However, the concepts are now recognized as Kantian synthetics that reach across the third antinomy (representing the rift offered by the One and Many of Greek philosophy), they are not

products of Rand's "law of identity" that is also conveniently found ignoring the very emotive middle-term that holds concepts together. Rather, it is the middle-term that signifies the changeless identity. It is the authentic synthesis that supports the identity that unites the analytic and the empirical. Even the facts of reality, that pass over to human concepts, come as authentic synthetics that are open to less than perfect interpretations. This simple modification corrects Rand's epistemology. The Many now reconcile themselves with the One, and this implies that knowledge is vastly additive as predicted by objectivism, but coming with a proviso that emotion must become more fully integrated with logic.

References

Ayn Rand, 1990, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology: Expanded Second Edition*, Plume.