

Concepts and Their Role in Knowledge: Reflections on Objectivist Epistemology (Ayn Rand Soc Philosophical Stu) (Ayn Rand Society Philosophical Studies)

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The philosopher and novelist Ayn Rand (1905–1982) is a cultural phenomenon. Her books have sold more than twenty-eight million copies, and countless individuals speak of her writings as having significantly influenced their lives. Despite her popularity, Rand's philosophy of Objectivism has received little serious attention from academic philosophers.

Concepts and Their Role in Knowledge offers scholarly analysis of key elements of Ayn Rand's radically new approach to epistemology. The four essays, by contributors intimately familiar with this area of her work, discuss Rand's theory of concepts—including its new account of abstraction and essence—and its central role in her epistemology; how that view leads to a distinctive conception of the justification of knowledge; her realist account of perceptual awareness and its role in the acquisition of knowledge; and finally, the implications of that theory for understanding the growth of scientific knowledge. The volume concludes with critical commentary on the essays by distinguished philosophers with differing philosophical viewpoints and the author's responses to those commentaries.

This is the second book published in Ayn Rand Society Philosophical Studies, which was developed in conjunction with the Ayn Rand Society to offer a fuller scholarly understanding of this highly original and influential thinker. The Ayn Rand Society, an affiliated group of the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, seeks to foster scholarly study by philosophers of the philosophical thought and writings of Ayn Rand.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A landmark set of essays, with comments and responses, exploring the implications of Rand's theories on perception, concept-formation, definition, justification, and conceptual change in science. The publication of this remarkable and engaging volume brings to the attention of professionals a theory of knowledge whose depth, breadth, and nuance may surprise them.”
—Harry Binswanger, Editor, second edition of *Ayn Rand’s Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*

“By locating Rand’s theory of concepts in both traditional and contemporary debates, this collection offers a textured portrait of her distinctive view while also advancing the debates themselves. The essays are uniformly engaging and incisive, making substantial contributions on such topics as definitions, theory change, and epistemic justification. The crosscurrents in the comments and responses make the issues come alive, and broader applications (such as for value theory) are apparent. Overall, a terrific contribution.”
—Tara A. Smith, University of Texas-Austin

“This second volume of Ayn Rand Society Philosophical Studies provides extensive analysis of Ayn Rand’s epistemology, the most important—but perhaps the least well-known—part of her philosophy of Objectivism. Contributed by scholars both sympathetic to and critical of Rand’s approach, these revealing essays address a wide range of topics, including Rand’s unique accounts of concept-formation and objectivity.”
—Darryl Wright, Harvey Mudd College

About the Author

Allan Gotthelf is Anthem Foundation Distinguished Fellow for Research and Teaching in Philosophy at Rutgers University. He is the author of *On Ayn Rand and Teleology, First Principles, and Scientific Method in Aristotle’s Biology and* coeditor of *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle’s Biology and the forthcoming Ayn Rand: A Companion to Her Works and Thought.*

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