

Ayn Rand: *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*

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Youtube Playlist Link:

http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=59B2C09D51EBD222

Chapter 1 §1: **Cognition and Measurement**

- Consciousness is an active state.
 - It is a state *of* awareness. $K_R\Delta$
- All forms of consciousness are forms of awareness, but not all forms of awareness are forms of consciousness. [The awareness that is unconscious] see the unknown known problem [here](#).
- **The Development of Consciousness:**
 - Sensual: unincorporated within memory: only identify *that* something exists, never *what* that thing is.
 - Perceptual: the foundational basis for all knowledge
 - Conceptual: The reflection of one's knowledge of percepts
- **Percept**: [very important] cluster of sensations that are self evident
 - **Two Essential Characteristics of Consciousness**
 - 1: Differentiation: Pattern Recognition
 - 2: Integration: Association of Percepts
- The Existent: is the epistemological foundation. The *to be / is*
 - Inaccessible at the sensual or the perceptual stage
 - Only accessible at the conceptual stage
 - Perception is contingent on a recognition of existence
 - The development of consciousness is contingent on a recognition of existence [it is irrefutable]

Three Forms of Existence: [my addition]

- **Possible:** ($\diamond P$): The 50 foot woman / unicorns / nymphs [power in recognition]
- **Actual:** ($\square P \vee P=P$): us / here / this [obsessively defined, obvious recognition]
- **Impossible:** ($P \bullet \sim P$): The circle that is a square [Impossible recognition]
 - Logic: All possible has the potential for actualization
 - Logic: All actual is the fulfillment of the possible
 - * [for a deeper discussion watch these videos](#)
- The development of consciousness is contingent on a highly developed knowledge of existence, i.e., the recognition.
- **3 Stages in developing the concept of existent:**
 - **Objective awareness:** first recognitions of **entity** [things in the world]
 - **Specific objective awareness:** objective discrimination [first recognition of **identity**] the red ball.
 - **Objective “Unit” Awareness:** (ness, taxonomic classification) [see above link]
 - differential isolation
 - integrative similarities
 - “The ability to regard entities as units is man’s distinctive method of cognition”¹

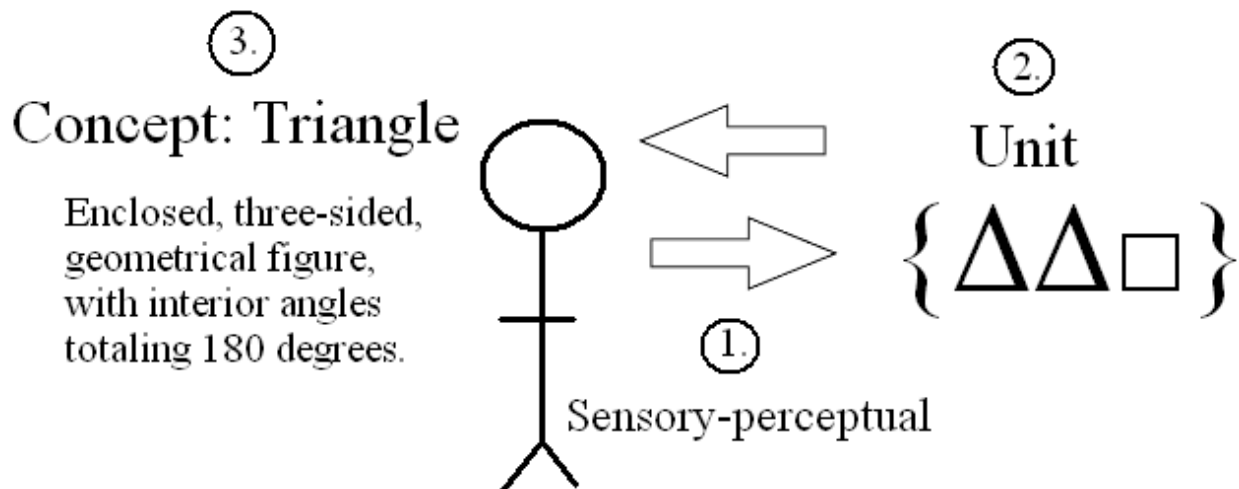
Chapter 1§2:

Unit Classification:

- An individual component of @ least 2 members.
 - E.g., $\{\Delta\Delta\square\}$ in the set $\{\Delta\Delta\square\}$ \square is not a unit $\Delta\Delta$ are two units of the group Δ . The group classification is Δ and its constituent members are $\Delta\Delta$ in the set $\{\Delta\Delta\square\}$.
- A method of identification [which is the 2nd stage of understanding existence].

¹ Rand, Ayn, Leonard Peikoff, and Harry Binswanger. 1990. *Introduction to objectivist epistemology*. New York, N.Y.: New American Library. p. 6.

- Unit classification is based on the perception in reality.
- Units are the link between metaphysics and epistemology
 - **Metaphysics**: Analysis of *being*: is(ness)
 - This is, that is, I am
 - **Epistemology**: Analysis of how we know or come to know:
 - I know that that is because...
 - I know that I am because...
 - **Unit**: Metaphysics↔Unit↔Epistemology
 - Example of unit classification in a sentence:
 - “I know that theses are triangles because...”
 - I know (epistemology) that these (unit classification) are (metaphysics) triangles because (epistemological justification).
- **Conceptualization**:
 - Contingent on the recognition of unit classification.



- **2 Fields of Cognition**
 - **Conceptual**:
 - **Mathematical**: concept formation is largely mathematical
 - Contingent on **measurement**
 - Recognition of a relationship (2), that has been standardized among units of a similar kind. Aka: **Natural laws**.

- **Requirements for a standard of measurement:**
 - Attribute representation:
 - “Easily perceivable by man”²
 - Immutable and Absolute
- “The purpose of measurement is to **expand the range of man’s consciousness, of his knowledge, beyond the perceptual level**”³
 - Thus, ∞ is a mathematical rather than a metaphysical concept. [very important distinction, explain]
 - E.g., Anselm’s Ontological Argument TWNGCBC.⁴ [logical error, refuted by Rand’s epistemology], metaphysical error.
 - Access to the ∞ as mathematical, through the finite. [man as measure].
 - Knowledge is contingent on mathematical **precision**.
 - **“Man’s mathematical and conceptual abilities develop simultaneously”**⁵
 - [math deficiencies → conceptual difficulties]

Chapter 2 §1: **Concept -Formation**

- **Concept:**
 - Integration of two or more units, $\{\Delta\Delta\square\}$,
 - Isolated by specific characteristics:
 - An enclosed three sided geometrical figure with interior angles totaling 180 degrees.
- **Isolation:**
 - Requires the use of **abstraction**
- **Uniting:** the *integration* of units, [Aristotle’s form], not these triangles but the concept, triangle.
- **Measurements:** “must exist in some quantity, but may exist in any quantity”⁶

² Ibid., p. 8.

³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴ I miss state this in the video: I meant to say that which none greater can be conceived, not perceived.

⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

⁶ Ibid., 12.

- **The Epistemological Role of Language:**
 - “Language is exclusive domain and tool of concepts”⁷
 - Words denote concepts
 - Concepts are transformed into mental *entities*. [Hypothetical syllogism] ∴ Words create mental entities, example of the circle triangle.
 - Definitions furnish identity.
- If one has objective awareness [**visual**] → one is able to transform concepts into mental *entities*, the circle triangle as an e.g., [**stage 1**: in existent concept development]⁸
- If one is able to define [**essential**] → one is able to *identify*, the mathematical definition of a triangle [**stage 2**: in existent concept development]⁹ definitional is the essential awareness.
- If one is able to isolate specifically shared attributes within the objective world [**conceptual**] → one is may regard entities as *units*, { $\Delta\Delta\Box$ } to “triangle” [**stage 3**: in existent concept development]¹⁰
- **Simple Concept Formation:**
 - Identification of a *single attribute*:
 - Length, volume, mass, scope, velocity etc...
 - The attribute is identified in the world.
 - The attribute is located among various entities possessing that attribute
 - The variation of the attribute among entities serves as the standard with which we recognize measurement
 - **Measurement isolated**: yields only a difference in the attribute
 - **Measurement + Attribute**: The quantitative ability to assess the variations in the attribute
 - **Attribute only**: the formation of the concept devoid of its attributive instantiation.
 - With intellectual development, the complexity of our knowledge **and range** has the ability to grow.

⁷ Ibid., p.10.

⁸ See, pg., 2 “3 Stages in developing the concept of existent” of the notes.

⁹ See, pg., 2 “3 Stages in developing the concept of existent” of the notes.

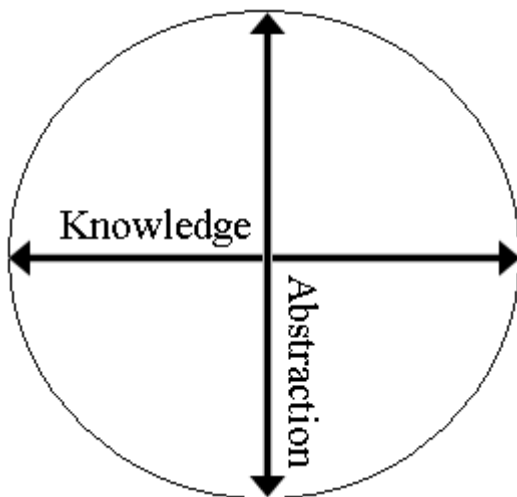
¹⁰ See, pg., 2 “3 Stages in developing the concept of existent” of the notes.

Chapter 2 §2:

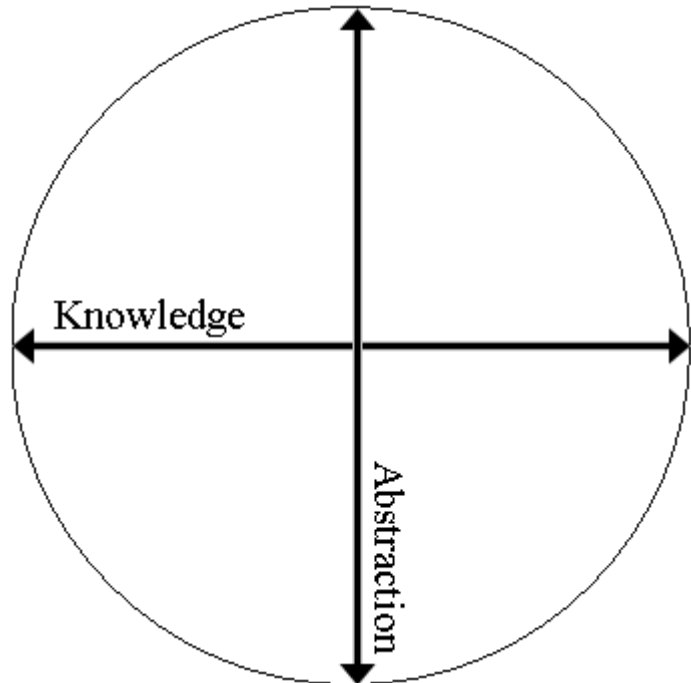
- **The Growth of our Conceptual Range**

- **Conceptual Range**:
 - Comprised of knowledge and the power of abstraction
- **A limited conceptual range**: can be represented by pictures, i.e., **pictorial representation**.
 - **Pictorial Representations**: can represent simple abstraction
 - Pictorial representations exist at the perceptual level.
- **An expanded conceptual range**: possibly develops from visual representations of concepts.
 - **Symbolic Code**: can represent complex abstraction

Pictorial Representation



Symbolic Representation



- **Similarity and Differentiation**:

- **Similarity**: “the relationship between two or more existents which possess the same characteristics but in different measure or degree.”¹¹ [e.g., length]

¹¹ Ibid., p. 13.

- **Differentiation**: requires “*commensurable characteristics*” [similar unit of measurement]
 - “Incommensurable characteristics cannot be integrated into one unit”¹²
 - **Differentiation of measurements**:
 - **First**: An attribute is isolated e.g., shape [*commensurability*]
 - **Second**: Variations in the attribute are identified various shapes, e.g., squares, circles etc. [*attribute differentiation*].
 - **Third**: Attribute similarity is directly observed, i.e., without awareness. This is done *perceptually*.
 - **Finally**: the goal: “philosophical epistemology and theoretical mathematics have a similar goal...bringing the universe within the range of man’s knowledge—by identifying relationships to perceptual data.”¹³
- **Color differentiation and Conceptual Range**:
 - Pictorial Representation: “Red”, “Blue”
 - Symbolic Representation: Red: 650 nm,¹⁴ Blue: 475 nm¹⁵

Chapter 2 §3:

The Conceptual Common Denominator:

- Defined as: “the characteristic reducible to a unit of measurement, by which man differentiates two or more existents from other existents possessing it”¹⁶
- The “it” refers to the attribute
- **Concepts are reducible to perceptual entities**, e.g., (infinity, the foot).

¹² Ibid., p. 13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴ http://eosweb.larc.nasa.gov/EDDOCS/Wavelengths_for_Colors.html#red

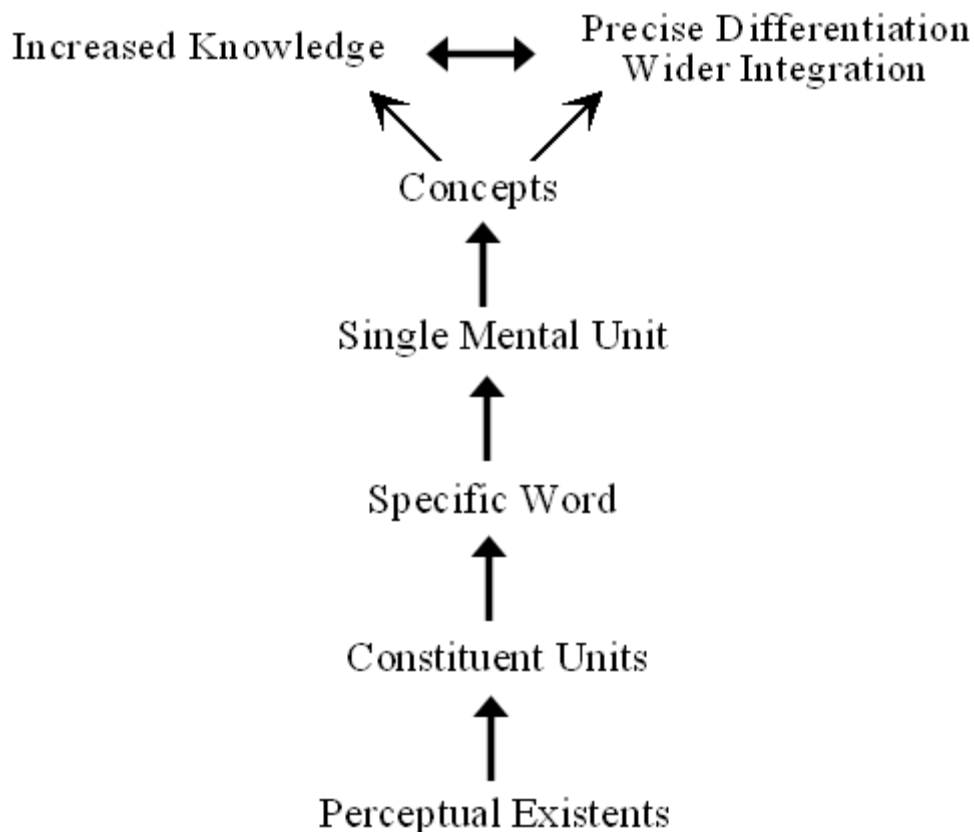
¹⁵ http://eosweb.larc.nasa.gov/EDDOCS/Wavelengths_for_Colors.html#blue

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

Concept / Entity / Attribute and Awareness:

- **Concepts:**
 - Our first concepts are concepts of entities
- **Entities:**
 - “The only primary existence”¹⁷
- **Attributes:**
 - Always exist in relation with entities, never by themselves
 - The “distinguishing characteristic”
- **Awareness:**
 - **Two forms of Awareness:**
 - **Perceptual:** “non cognitive” (the given) / **devoid of abstraction.**
 - **Conceptual:** very cognitive, unite construction and recognition of *similarities*. **Defined by abstraction.**

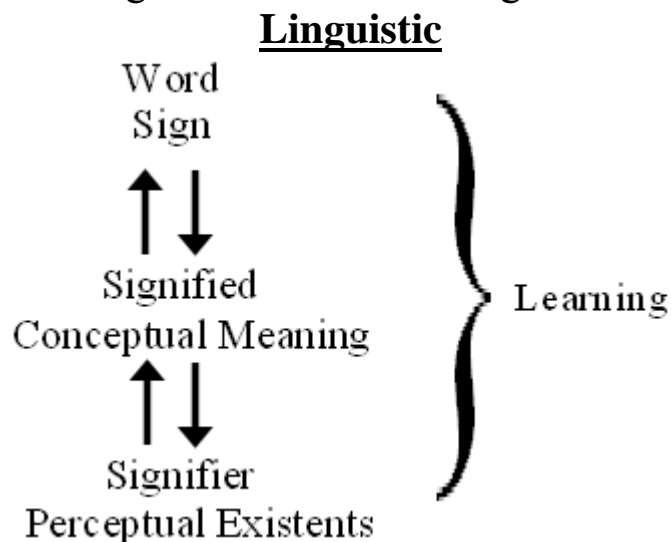
Chapter 3§1: Abstraction from Abstractions:



¹⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

Language and Concept-Formation:

- **Meaning**: a result of the differentiation and integration of perceptual concretes. (*words denote perceptual existents*)
 - **Denotation**: (semiotic denotation)
 - [Background Information on Semiotics]
 - **Sign**: a “unit” of meaning comprised of **both** the signified and the signifier. [e.g., shushing]
 - **Signified**: Conceptual Meaning
 - **Signifier**: Perceptual Existents (physical)
- **Learning**: the recognition / understanding of meaning



- E.g., “I see a red ball”

Complex Concept-Formation:

- A **complex concept** is a collection of “constituent units”.
 - Specified within a range of **functions**

