

An Anti-Stoic Analysis Of Free Will That May (Or May Not) Be Helpful To Us

Post by “Cassius” of September 24, 2021 at 9:46 AM

Here is a reply to this thread on Facebook I want to memorialize, posted by Aaron Smith (author of the article) on 9/21/21:

Rand would disagree that reifying abstractions (e.g., 'capitalism') is part of Objectivism. Her view is Aristotelian in that only entities exist; abstractions do not -- at least not in the Platonist sense. In the 2nd ed. of her book Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, there's a good discussion of the sense in which she thinks that concepts can and cannot be thought of as entities (it's the section called 'Concepts as Mental Existents' -- in my copy, it's pp. 153-158). There's also a good discussion of the problem of people (Objectivists and non-Objectivists) Platonizing abstractions in The Art of Non-Fiction (an edited book version of a series of lectures Rand gave informally in her living room); it's chapter 4, pp. 27-31. There *is* a sense in which a concept has an identity. But since a concept, on Rand's view, results of the way we integrate the material provided by the senses (which is neither automatic or unerring) -- the identity of a concept is man-made, so to speak, rather than an immutable metaphysically-given fact of nature. So I think you're right to criticize the Platonizing of abstractions, but not in ascribing that kind of approach to Rand -- though you may have met fans of her ideas doing that -- I certainly have. At any rate, the resource on these questions is her book Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, 2nd, ed. Hope that's of some help.

And here is my reply to that:

Aaron thank you very much for those cites. For just the reason I posted, I think someone studying this issue would be well served by considering Rand's statements as part of the mix. Given that this is complicated enough as it is, do you have a typo here in this sentence "But since a concept, on Rand's view, results of the way we integrate the material provided by the senses (which is neither automatic or unerring)"? "results of the way?" I'm not sure that "in" for "of" is more clear so if you could look at that I would appreciate it as I would like to keep this thread for future reference.

I think your comment I am quoting here below is an important point that I would not suggest is limited to the Rand world. The problem is endemic to Stoicism, given it's Platonic basis, but I think there is a lot of work that needs to be done within the community of Epicurean partisans to deal with this problem too: ***the identity of a concept is man-made, so to speak, rather than an immutable metaphysically-given fact of nature. So I think you're right***

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