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Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics

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Free Minds '09
www.StatLit.org/pdf/2009SchieldFreeMinds6up.pdf

Full Paper at
www.StatLit.org/pdf/2009SchieldFreeMinds.pdf

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Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics

1. Objectivism has strengths.
2. .
3. .
4. .
5. .

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Rand's Books are Being Read (Lower Rank means More Sales)

Amazon Sales Ranking of Books (June '09):

- 250: *Atlas Shrugged*
- 300: *The Audacity of Hope* (Obama)
- 500: *Purpose-Driven Life* (Warren)
- 4,000: *Silent Spring* (Carson)
- 5,000: *The Fountainhead*
- 25,000: *An Inconvenient Truth* (Gore)
- 60,000: *Objectivism: Philosophy of Ayn Rand*
- 184,000: *Scientology: Fundamentals of Thought*

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Rand's Books Are Being Read Total copies sold (millions)

- Bible, New International Ver. (150 since '78)
- Ron Hubbard: Fiction (25); Non-fiction (23).
- Ayn Rand: Fiction (19), non-fiction (6)
- **Atlas Shrugged (6.5), The Fountainhead (6.5)**
- Anthem (4), We the Living (3)
- **Virtue of Selfishness (1.25)**
- For the New Intellectual (1), Capitalism (0.6)

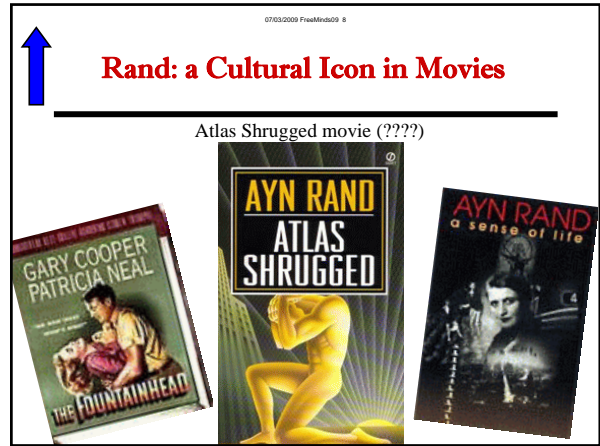
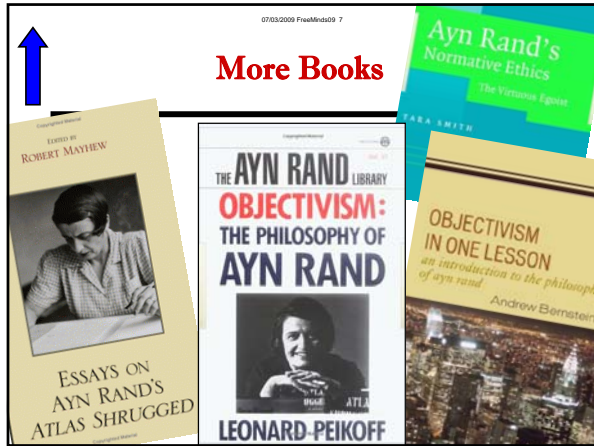
Various sources.

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Ayn Rand is a Cultural Icon

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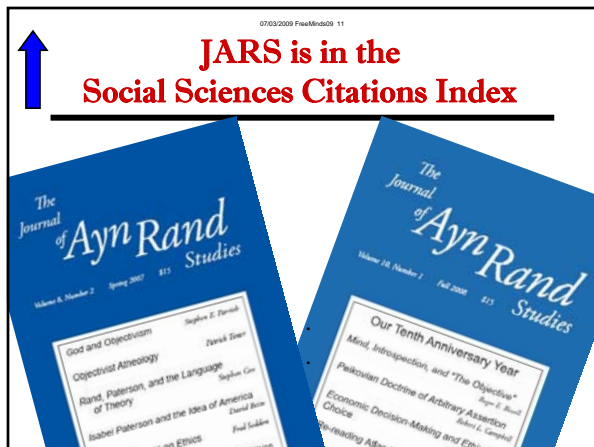
Ayn Rand is a Cultural Icon



Ayn Rand Institute is Growing; The Atlas Society is Holding

ANNUAL EXPENSES (millions)	2002	2007
Liberty Fund	20	30 ↑
CATO Institute	18	19 →
Pacific Legal Foundation	6.5	8.6 ↑
Reason Foundation	4.8	7.7 ↑
Institute for Justice	4.7	8.9 ↑
Ayn Rand Institute (ARI)	3.7	6.8 ↑
Foundation for Econ. Education	2.0	2.9 ↑
The Objectivist Center (Atlas Soc.)	1.3	1.2 →

- Ayn Rand Institute (ARI) Strengths**
- School Essay Contest: 521 prizes (~\$80K).**
- 8th - 10th: Anthem. 11-12th: The Fountainhead
 - 12th grade and college: Atlas Shrugged
- Objectivist Academic Center (OAC):**
- American Philosophical Association outreach
 - OAC student scholarships and books to professors
- Ayn Rand Center (ARC) in Washington DC**
- Individual Rights: Policy and Outreach
 - Executive Leadership Program



Kelley's "Art of Reasoning" Textbook is an Academic Success

A critical thinking textbook that


- Starts with classification
- Presents concepts as hierarchical
- Introduces definitions as contextual
- Focuses on generalizations

I am one of the reviewers of Dr. Kelley's draft for his 4th edition.


I use this text for my Critical Thinking class.

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**The Atlas Society is Upholding
Open Objectivism**



I need no warrant for being, and no word of sanction upon my being. I am the warrant and the sanction.
Ayn Rand, Anthem



Founded by Dr. Kelley in 1990:
Upholds tolerance and benevolence as virtues.
Upholds Objectivism as an open philosophy.

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**Promoting Objectivity
in Science and Ethics**

1. Objectivism has strengths.
2. Objectivism has weaknesses.

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Objectivism is Small Financially

ANNUAL 990* EXPENSES (millions)	2007
National Geographic Society	484
National Rifle Association (NRA)	196
Billy Graham Evangelistic Association	111
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)	61
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)	49
Sierra Club	30
Creation Museum (Answers in Genesis)	19
Objectivism: ARI and TAS/TOC	8

* Source: www.Guidestar.org

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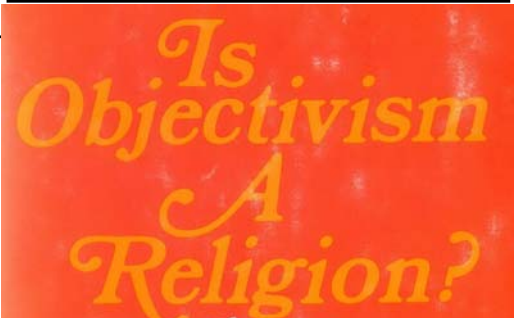
**Objectivism:
Not much impact culturally**

Google matches (millions) as of 6/09:

- God (466), evolution (178), democracy (83),
- feminism (18), free market (8), libertarian (8),
- liberalism (6), materialism (6), Marxism (5)
- spiritualism (4), environmentalism (3)
- relativism (2), existentialism (2),
- "Ayn Rand" (2), Objectivism (1.9)
- "Atlas Shrugged" (.8), egalitarianism (.8)
- "John Galt" (.7), "The Fountainhead" (.6)

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**Objectivism is Often Dismissed
as a Dogmatic Religion**



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**Objectivism is Often Dismissed
as a Dogmatic Religion**

Why Objectivism is a religion (Ellis, 1968):



- Extremism and Dogmatism
- Absolutism and Need for Certainty
- Tautological and Definitional Thinking
- Intolerance of Opposing Views
- Deification and Hero Worship
- Unrealism and Anti Empiricism
- Condemning and Punitive Attitudes

<http://www.noblesoul.com/orc/books/other/religion.html>

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Objectivism is Viewed as a Cult

The Sociology of the Ayn Rand Cult (1972)
by Murray Rothbard





www.lewrockwell.com/rothbard/rothbard23.html

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Michael Shermer Rational and Respected

Founder of *The Skeptics Society* and Chief Editor of its magazine: *Skeptic*.
The Skeptics Society currently has over 55,000 members.




Shermer is also the producer and co-host of the 13-hour Fox Family television series *Exploring the Unknown*. Since April 2004, he has been a monthly columnist for *Scientific American* magazine with his Skeptic column.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Shermer

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Michael Shermer Has Studied Objectivism

“There are more Rand critics than followers. I am not one of them. Ayn Rand has probably influenced my thinking more than any other author. I have read all of her works, including her newsletters, early works, and the two major biographies.”

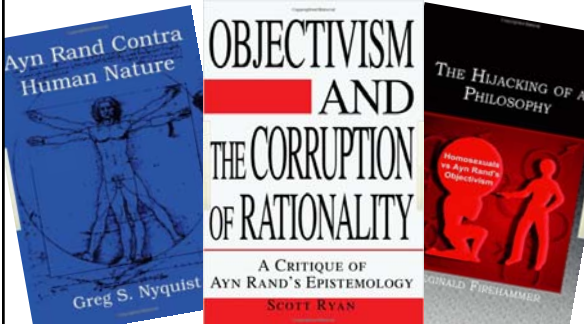


“The *fallacy in Objectivism* is the belief that **absolute** knowledge and **final** Truths are attainable through reason.”

www.michaelshermer.com *Skeptic* vol. 2, no. 2, 1993, pp. 74-81.

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Objectivism Has Intellectual Critics



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Rand's view of Cultural Change Ford Hall Forum '72

“Since the cause of our problem is the **universities**, if you want to reform any one institution, start there, because philosophy determines a culture and thus the direction of a country, and philosophy is the specialty of the university.”



“If you want a **crusade**, start with the **universities**.”

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Objectivism: Not much impact academically

Matches by phrase in the EBSCO **Academic Search Premier Index** of over 216,000 titles:

- 200k - 300k: values, evolution
- 75k - 200k: rights, religion, ethics
- 50k - 75k: responsibility, tolerance
- 25k - 50k: faith, duty, rational
- 2k - 10k: revelation, Aristotle, Kant
- “individual rights” (8k), Libertarian (1.5k)
- Objectivism (328), “Ayn Rand” (297)

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**Objectivism has
Three 'Hard Nuts' to Crack**

In trying to persuade others to see the value of Objectivism, Dr. Kelley noted that Objectivism has three “hard nuts” to crack:

- **Atheism**
- **Egoism**
- **Laissez-faire capitalism**

Source: Dr. Kelley's talk (2009), "The Future of Objectivism," at Free Minds '09

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**Open Objectivism
is Active but Not Flourishing**

Little work on Kelley's short list of open issues*:

- Certainty and proof [induction]
- Mind-brain relation, emergent properties
- Cardinal values
- Virtues
- Value of family

Recall: “certainty” blocked Michael Shermer.

* Presented by Dr. Kelley (2009) in his talk on The Future of Objectivism at Free Minds '09

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**Marketing Conclusion:
Don't expect Objectivism to Grow**

Objectivism's strengths are primarily related to Rand's fiction.

Objectivism's weaknesses have blocked rapid growth for the past 50 years and will continue to do so for the next 50 – unless a different approach is used.

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**Marketing Recommendation:
Find Something Overlooked to Sell**

Objectivism needs to offer **readily-acceptable** solutions to important social problems.

Look for something in Objectivism – *like Galt's motor* – that is relevant to today's problems.

Adopt Hudgins' *St. Paul approach**: require less agreement on 'hard-nut' outcomes; focus more on mutually-acceptable fundamentals.

* In his Free Minds '09 talk, "Objectivism, Reason and Freedom Status Report 2009," Ed Hudgins noted that Christianity spread faster because Paul dropped the Jewish dietary restrictions and the requirement of male circumcision.

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**Promoting Objectivity
in Science and Ethics**

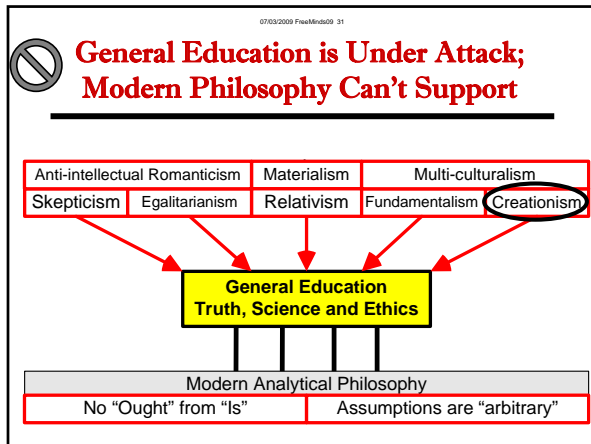
↑ 1. Objectivism has strengths.
↓ 2. Objectivism has weaknesses.
⊘ 3. Truth and value issues increasingly divisive.

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**Fighting Cultural Forces:
Meaning vs. Materialism**

Year	Be very well off financially (%)	Develop a meaningful philosophy of life (%)
1967	85	40
1973	75	45
1979	65	55
1985	55	65
1991	45	70
1997	42	72
2003	40	75

Source: UCLA College Freshman Survey www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/index.php



Only 26% of Adults Uphold Science: Evolution via Natural Selection

Humans and other living things have:	ALL	BA	<4	HS
1) Existed in their present form only**	42%	27	42	50
2) Evolved over time	48%	66	51	36
a. Guided by a supreme being*	18%	20	21	15
b. Through natural selection	26%	40	26	18
c. Don't know	4%	6	4	3
3) Don't know	10%	7	7	14

** Young-earth creationists? * Intelligent Design?
 BA = College grad, <4 = Some College, HS = HS or less
 2005 Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life. <http://pewforum.org/surveys/origins/>

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Ethics and Values

Different starting points

Starting points are arbitrary.

Creation Museum

©AIG 2001

AIG CREATIONS www.AnswersInGenesis.org

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Psalms 104:24

Isaiah 40:28

©AIG 2004

AIG CREATIONS www.AnswersInGenesis.org

General Ed. is Defenseless if Assumptions are Arbitrary

Creationists hold that evolution is just a "theory." Science *cannot* test claims about unrepeatable origins. Requiring a naturalistic explanation is **arbitrary**.

Arbitrary: contingent solely upon one's discretion
 E.g., *an arbitrary decision*.

Creationists see a difference in assumptions:

1. Scientific: Everything has a natural explanation.
2. Religious: Accuracy of the bible taken literally.

Science **cannot** say the religious assumption is false.

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General Education and Knowing: What does it mean to "believe"?

Primordial Soup

By Daniel Nuckols

Who said evolution is not a religion?

Copyright 2001 Daniel Nuckols
www.danspuit.com

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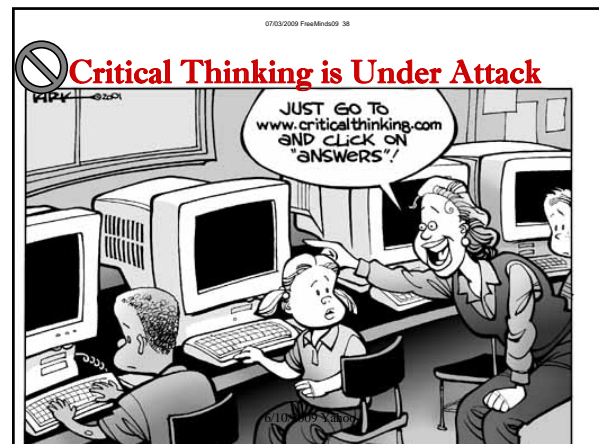
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**Big Bang Cosmology:
"faith as much as ... truth"**

Big Bang Cosmology

'Big bang cosmology is probably as widely believed as has been any theory of the universe in the history of Western civilization. It rests, however, on many untested, and in some cases untestable, assumptions. Indeed, big bang cosmology has become a bandwagon of thought that reflects faith as much as objective truth.'

Burbidge, G., 1992.
Why only one big bang?
Scientific American, 266 (2):96.



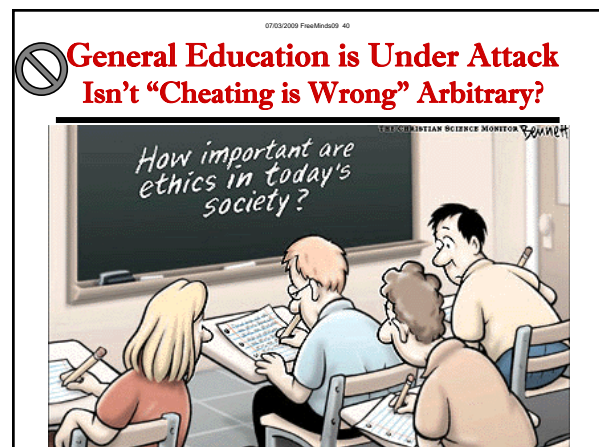
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**AACU Can't Justify
Personal and Social Responsibility**

"Students' ethical, civic, and moral development must be addressed as part of their basic responsibilities as learners.

It is crucial that we return to the core commitments of personal and social responsibility inherent in liberal education."

American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU)
www.aacu.org/meetings/PSR09/index.cfm



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**International Conference on
New Directions in the Humanities**



One organizations is aware of this problem and is actively seeking solutions – new directions – for the humanities.

"The humanities are argued to be like the 'canary in the coal mine' because they are more sensitive to the problem of unobservables, the lack of objective standards and the failure to solve or resolve the problem of induction."

Schild (2004): *Resolving Three Key Problems in the Humanities*. Prato, Italy.
www.StatLit.org/pdf/2004SchildNDIH.pdf

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**Promoting Objectivity
in Science and Ethics**

- ★
- ↑ 1. Objectivism has strengths.
- ↓ 2. Objectivism has weaknesses.
- ⊘ 3. Truth and value issues increasingly divisive.
- ★ 4. Objectivist epistemology promotes objectivity in science and ethics.

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★ **Objectivity – Being Objective – Should be the Primary Virtue**

“Objectivity ... pertains to the relationship of consciousness to existence.

- Metaphysically, it is the recognition of the fact that reality exists independent of any perceiver’s consciousness.
- Epistemologically, it is the recognition of the fact that a perceiver’s (man’s) consciousness must acquire knowledge of reality by certain means (reason) in accordance with certain rules (logic).”

Source: “Objectivity” in the Ayn Rand Lexicon

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★ **Objectivity Supports Tolerance and Benevolence**

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★ **Objectivity “Allows For” Ethical Differences**

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★ **Objectivity Supports Generosity**

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★ **Forming Sound Generalizations Require Objectivity**

- Kelley: “*Universals and Induction*” (1988)
- Peikoff: “*Objectivism Through Induction*”
- Peikoff: “*Induction in Physics & Philosophy*”

These three talks show the relation between objectivity and generalizations with applications to science and ethics.

All three involve **induction**.

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★ **Generalizations (Inductions) Some Examples**

Science generalizations (inductions)


- Water runs downhill.
- All men are mortal.

Ethical generalizations (inductions)

- Man’s basic means of survival is reason.
- The right to life is the source of all rights

Examples from *Induction in Physics and Philosophy* by L. Peikoff

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The Problem of Induction

How do we know if a generalization is true?

- “All swans are white.”


Today, we know this induction is false.

How do we know that

- water runs downhill [everywhere]?
- Man’s basic means of survival is reason?

No formal test or proof of a valid induction.

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Solution or Resolution of the Problem of Induction


“The Problem of Induction has been insolvable for so long because the nature of human consciousness has been misunderstood for so long.

To solve the Problem of Deduction, one must grasp that A is A, which is Aristotle’s monumental achievement.

But to solve the Problem of Induction, one must grasp one other monumental achievement: Ayn Rand’s theory of concepts.”

Leonard Peikoff, *Induction in Physics and Philosophy*

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Objectivity is Not Quoting a Book

“A human source of your philosophy is a bad thing, unless that’s just a timesaver that you drop out at a certain point.

It should never be essential to you when you think of philosophy that I wrote a book or gave a lecture, or that Ayn Rand wrote a book.”

Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism Through Induction*

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Finding Objectivity is a Personal Journey


“It should never be essential to you when you think of philosophy that I wrote a book or gave a lecture, or that Ayn Rand wrote a book.

Those things are fine as maps to point out where to look or to give you an advance report on what she found.






But you have to make the trip, be focused on the road and not on her report.”

Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism Through Induction*


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Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics

-  1. Objectivism has strengths.
-  2. Objectivism has weaknesses.
-  3. Truth and value issues increasingly divisive.
-  4. Objectivist epistemology promotes objectivity in science and ethics.
-  5. Plan: Help others form evidence-based inductions in science and ethics.

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Energy was Galt’s Motor; Induction is Rand’s Motor


Objectivity in forming ideas is the means by which Ayn Rand discovered everything.

Forming generalizations (inductions) objectively was the hallmark of her thinking.

If it worked for Ayn Rand, it should work for those wanting to see her ideas succeed.

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**Focus More on Process;
Focus Less on Outcome**



Let's enjoy thinking as a process – just like Rand did.

Let's focus more on teaching others how to think more clearly and focus less on scoring their results.

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**To be Successful Evangelists,
Objectivists Need To:**

- Stop “preaching” Rand and her philosophy.
- Sell the Virtue of Objectivity as applicable to ethics as well as to science.
- Teach evidence-based induction: Rand’s “motor”
- Help others integrate their view of human nature with mankind’s experience to form their own ethical conclusions.

Once people recognize the power of man’s mind to reach **sound** ethical conclusions, our world will be a much better place to live.



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**Promoting Objectivity
for Science and Ethics**

- ↑ 1. Objectivism has strengths.
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**Claim #1:
Objectivism has Strengths**

- Rand’s book are popular
- Rand is a cultural icon
- Books on Objectivism are increasing
- *Atlas Shrugged* may become a movie
- ARI is expanding
- Journal of Ayn Rand Studies is indexed
- Dr. Kelley’s textbook is an academic success
- TOC/TAS is maintaining open Objectivism

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**Claim #2:
Objectivism Has Weaknesses**

Objectivism is:

- not very big
- not very successful culturally
- dismissed as a religion or cult
- not achieving Rand’s goal at universities.

Open objectivism is active but not flourishing.


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 **Claim #3: Truth & Value Issues are Increasingly Divisive**

Upholding truth, science and ethics


- is under siege intellectually
- is under siege morally
- can't revert to religion or dogmatism
- can't rely on studies or relativism
- needs a way to generate ethical principles that eschews dogmatism and relativism

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 **Claim #4: The Objectivist Epistemology Promotes Objectivity**

- Objectivist epistemology upholds objectivity in all areas: truth, science and ethics.
- Intellectuals have reasoned objectively to form new conclusions.
- Forming good generalizations requires objectivity.
- Problem of induction has been solved/resolved by applying Rand's theory of concept formation.
- Dr. Peikoff supports abandoning the study of Rand as a primary and focusing on induction.

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 **Claim #5: Develop evidence-based inductions in science and ethics**

Induction is Rand's "motor."

To be successful **evangelists**, Objectivists should

- Omit everything involving Rand and Objectivism except her epistemology.
- Sell the process and let go of the outcome.
- Enjoy helping others on their voyage of discovery: