

Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics





Milo Schield

Objectivism should focus on promoting objectivity and Rand's method of thinking – induction.

Background: I first heard Nathaniel Branden speak in the mid sixties when he gave a talk introducing his recorded lectures on Objectivism. I didn't understand a lot of what he said, but I was attracted to the fact that he used words with precision. I had never heard somebody talk about what I called "soft topics" with such clarity. I remember thinking, "I want to understand exactly what he is saying." I have been working at that ever since.

I have a PhD in space physics. I am a professor in a department of Business Administration. I've taught critical thinking for over ten years and I am interested in the marketing of ideas.

My topic today is "Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics."

<p><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds '09 1</small></p> <h2 style="color: red;">Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics</h2> <hr/> <p>Milo Schield Professor, Augsburg College Director, W. M. Keck Statistical Literacy Project schild@augsborg.edu www.Augsburg.edu/ppages/~schild</p> <p><i>Free Minds '09</i> July 3, 2009 www.StatLit.org/pdf/2009SchieldFreeMinds6up.pdf</p>	<p><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds '09 2</small></p> <h2 style="color: red;">Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics</h2> <hr/> <p>  1. Objectivism has strengths.  2. .  3. .  4. .  5. . </p>
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I want to analyze Objectivism from a business perspective. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the movement? Objectivists need to be coldly realistic about this in order to see if the next 50 years are going to be any different than the past 50. Then I will look at some opportunities for Objectivism: some big social issues or problems that seem to promote social disharmony. Are there strengths within Objectivism that might be helpful in solving or resolving these problems – of seizing these opportunities? Finally, I will make a recommendation. You may not agree with my recommendation. That is OK. Hopefully the background will inspire you to make your own recommendations on how to move forward.

In the upper left hand corner of each of the slides, there will be one of these four arrows. An 'up arrow' (↑) indicates strengths, a 'down arrow' (↓) indicates weakness, a 'not sign' (∅) indicates a problem, a gold star (*) indicates a solution and an 'implication sign' or horizontal arrow (→) indicates a conclusion.

Strengths

Let's start with the strengths. You [this audience] know the strengths. So, I'm going to move through these rapidly.

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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)

Current rankings: According to Amazon's sales rankings, Peikoff's *Objectivism* ranks at 60,000 – there are 60,000 titles that are bought more often. You're not going to find *Objectivism* readily. Where are the classics? *The Fountainhead* and *Silent Spring* are in the 5,000 range. Where are the contemporary books? *Purpose Driven Life* (Rick Warren) and *Audacity of Hope* (Barack Obama) are in the 500 range. And surprise, there is the *Atlas Shrugged* in the 100-500 range. This high ranking is a real strength.

Total copies sold: As a reference, let's use the Bible and Ron Hubbard. People do confuse Objectivism with Scientology. Hubbard's books have total sales of around 50 million: 25 million of fiction; 25 million of nonfiction. Rand's books have total sales of about 25 million: 19 million of fiction and 6 million of nonfiction. *The Virtue of Selfishness*, which is probably the gateway to being a serious Objectivist, has sold about a million in total. With a conversion rate of 10% for these readers, this might indicate about 100,000 Objectivists – at some time in their lives.

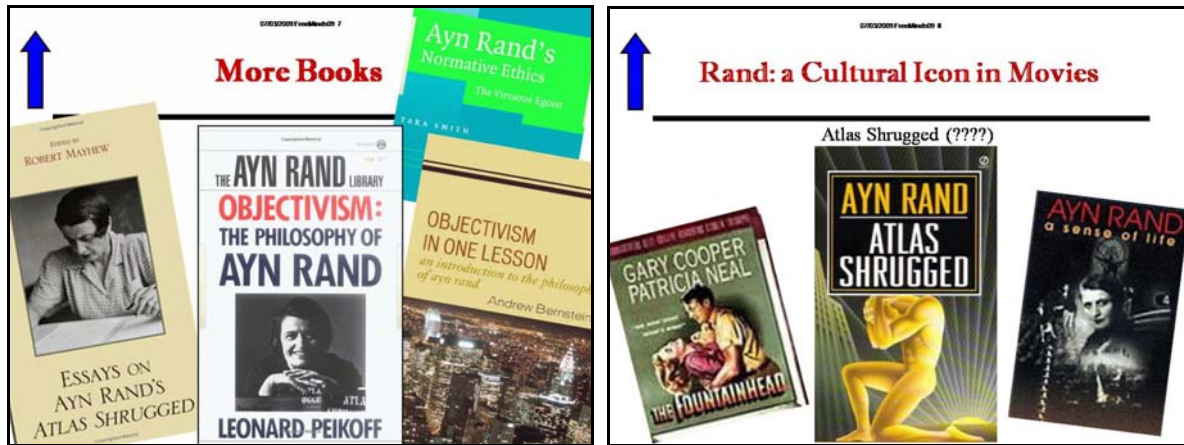
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Ayn Rand is a Cultural Icon

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Ayn Rand is a Cultural Icon

Rand is a cultural icon. The Objectivist movement is blessed to have a founder that had done so much that is still popular. If Rand had only written *The Virtue of Selfishness* and *The Objectivist Epistemology*, Objectivism might not still be here today.



Next slide: More books, movies. As of March, more positive news: maybe someone else is going to bankroll the movie. Who knows? But if *Atlas Shrugged* were made into a movie or miniseries, it could be a big assist to Objectivism.

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: 1985)	3.7	6.8 ↑
Foundation for Econ. Education	2.0	2.9 ↑
The Atlas Society (Obj. Center)	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

Look at how the movement is growing. In the 2002 column are the annual expenses for some of the foundations and organizations that are related to Objectivism. You can see where Objectivism stands. Liberty Fund and Cato are near the top—Objectivism is near the bottom. Let's see what has happened over the last five years. Compare the 2007 expenses with those in 2002. Most of these organizations increased their spending – which presumably means they have grown. But expenses at CATO are flat and those at The Atlas Society have shrunk. This lack of growth may be a sign of weakness. Objectivists certainly need to be realistic about what is happening in the movement in order to identify other opportunities for growth.

Consider the strengths of the Ayn Rand Institute (ARI). Their high school essay contest is a tremendous outreach operation. You have probably heard of their Objectivist Academic Center (OAC). You may not

have heard that they are focusing more on their relation with the American Philosophical Association, which is a positive. And an even bigger shift is opening the Ayn Rand Center (ARC) in Washington, D.C. This center focuses on individual rights and offers an executive outreach program. These are new developments—part of their growth. All of this indicates ARI is expanding -- moving outside their historic base.

JARS is in the Social Sciences Citations Index

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.

Another plus is JARS (Journal of Ayn Rand Studies). JARS is important in higher education, because JARS is in the Social Sciences Citation Index. There is a saying in higher education, "If you don't publish, nobody knows about you. If you don't publish in a peer-reviewed journal, nobody cares about you. If you don't publish in a peer-reviewed journal that's indexed, nobody can find out about you or reference you." Having JARS indexed is very significant.

Another strength of Objectivism is David Kelley's book: *The Art of Reasoning*. This book is an academic success: a critical thinking text that starts with classification, moves into definitions as contextual, focuses on generalization. [I need to say that I'm a reviewer on a draft for his fourth edition, and that I use his text in my critical thinking class.]

The Atlas Society is Upholding Open Objectivism

Founded by Dr. Kelley in 1990 as *The Objectivist Center*. Upholds tolerance and benevolence as virtues. Upholds Objectivism as an open philosophy.

Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics

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

The Atlas Society is another strength for Objectivism. This is a tremendous plus: an organization dedicated to upholding "open Objectivism," tolerance, and benevolence.

These are strengths that Objectivism has as an organization, as a movement, as a group of people that are joined together for a common end. Now consider some weaknesses.

Weaknesses

↓ 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 TOC	8

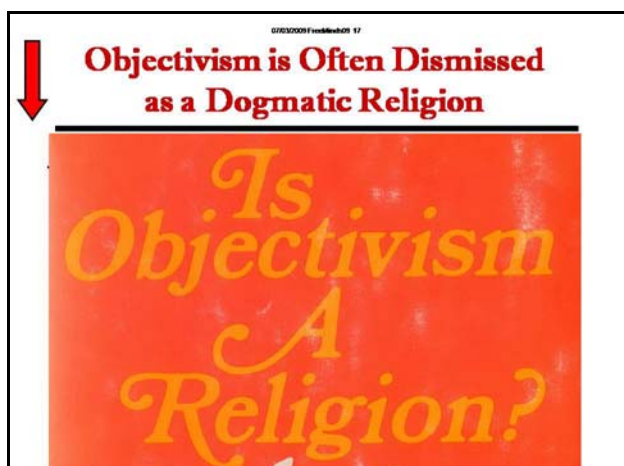
↓ Objectivism: Not much impact culturally

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)

First weakness: Objectivist organizations are small. Even if the two Objectivist organizations (ARI and TAS) are considered as a unit, the Creation Museum is double their combined size. You may not have heard about the Creation Museum, but I’ve been there. They have long lines of people waiting to get in, they have people coming in buses, they’ve got lots of visitors, they’ve got a web site—it’s incredible. Other cause-based organizations are much bigger: the Sierra Club, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), etc. By comparison, Objectivist organizations are very small.

Second weakness: Objectivism has not had much cultural impact. Let’s use Google web matches as a measure of cultural impact. This measure may not be great, but it’s quick. Big topics like God, evolution, and democracy have about 100 million matches. Interesting topics like free markets and environmentalism have 1 to 20 million matches. Objectivism has less than 2 million matches. On this absolute scale, Objectivism has not had much cultural impact.



↓ 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


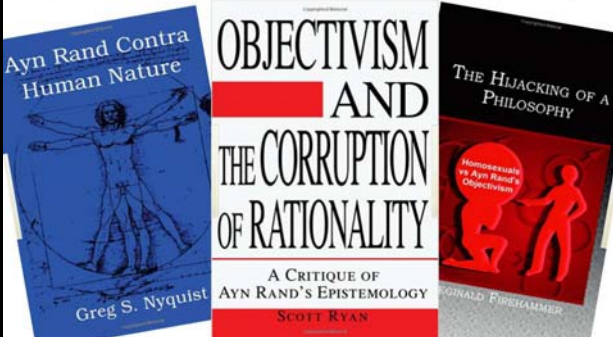
<http://www.nblesond.com/orc/books/other/religion.html>

Third weakness: Objectivism is viewed as a religion, a cult or an ideology.

- (1) In 1968, Albert Ellis published a book: *Is Objectivism a Religion?* He concluded Objectivism was a religion because it had these characteristics: extremism, dogmatism, absolutism, need for certainty and definitional thinking. You might say, "Well, that was 1968. That's old news. We're beyond that." Hold that thought.

<p style="text-align: center;">Objectivism is Viewed as a Cult</p> <p>The Sociology of the Ayn Rand Cult (1972) by Murray Rothbard</p>  <p><small>www.lcwrockwell.com/rothbard/rothbard23.html</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Michael Shermer Rational and Respected</p> <p>Founder of <i>The Skeptics Society</i> and Chief Editor of its magazine: <i>Skeptic</i>. The Skeptics Society currently has over 55,000 members.</p>  <p>Shermer is also the producer and co-host of the 13-hour Fox Family television series <i>Exploring the Unknown</i>. Since April 2004, he has been a monthly columnist for <i>Scientific American</i> magazine with his Skeptic column.</p> <p><small>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Shermer</small></p>
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- (2) There is the cult aspect as reported by Albert Ellis, Murray Rothbard and Jeff Walker. Ellis mentioned "deification and hero worship". You might say, "Well, maybe that was true when Rand was alive, but Rand has been dead for over a decade. That's old news."
- (3) Consider Michael Shermer. He's the person that founded the Skeptic Society (with 55,000 members today). He's the editor of their magazine. He has a monthly column in *Scientific American*. If I were looking at a target market for Objectivism, Michael Shermer would be my poster child. This is what Michael had to say: "Ayn Rand has probably influenced my thinking more than any other author." He's read *Atlas Shrugged* three times. He's read Rand's early works. His conclusion: "absolute knowledge and final truths, these are the fallacies in Objectivism."

<p style="text-align: center;">Michael Shermer Has Studied Objectivism</p> <p>"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."</p>  <p>"The fallacy in <i>Objectivism</i> is the belief that absolute knowledge and final Truths are attainable through reason."</p> <p><small>www.michaelshermer.com</small> <small>Skeptic vol. 2, no. 2, 1993, pp. 74-81.</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Objectivism Has Intellectual Critics</p> 
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So look at why these people see Objectivism as a religion, cult or ideology. (1) Objectivism involves absolutism, certainty and definitional thinking [Ellis], (2) Objectivism involves “deification” [Ellis, Rothbard and Walker], and (3) Objectivism claims absolute knowledge and final truths [Shermer].

Objectivists can say, “These doubters don’t really understand the nature of the Objectivist epistemology, our definition of certainty or contextual thinking.” But from a business perspective, if Objectivists can’t convince those who have studied Objectivism the most, then Objectivism has a real marketing problem if the goal is growth. Think about it!!!

On the other hand, there will be critics opposing everything, so maybe this doubt is just a sign that somebody cares enough about Objectivism to criticize it.

<p style="text-align: center;">Rand's view of Cultural Change Ford Hall Forum '72</p> <hr/> <p>“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.”</p>  <p>“If you want a crusade, start with the universities.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Objectivism: Not much impact academically</p> <hr/> <p>Matches by phrase in the EBSCO Academic Search Premier Index of over 216,000 titles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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Fourth weakness: Objectivism has had minimal impact in Universities. Rand noted that philosophy is the specialty of the university and thus universities are the cause of the problems for Objectivism. Rand said, “If you want to start a crusade, start with the universities.” How well has Objectivism done in the universities? Go to the Academic Search Index. What topics are academics writing about or referencing? How many articles or books have they written that reference various topics? Evolution and values are referenced by 200 to 300 thousand articles, responsibility and tolerance by 50 to 75 thousand, while Kant and Aristotle are reference by 2 to 10 thousand. Ayn Rand is referenced by 297. So, Objectivism may be making progress on a relative scale —but not an absolute scale. Objectivism is not having a major impact yet in the university.

<p style="text-align: center;"><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds09 25</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Objectivism has Three 'Hard Nuts' to Crack</p> <hr/> <p>In trying to persuade others to see the value of Objectivism, Dr. Kelley noted that Objectivism has three “hard nuts” to crack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atheism • Egoism • Laissez-faire capitalism <p><small>Source: Dr. Kelley's talk (2009), "The Future of Objectivism," at Free Minds '09</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds09 26</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Open Objectivism is Active but Not Flourishing</p> <hr/> <p>Little work on Kelley's short list of open issues*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certainty and proof [induction] • Mind-brain relation, emergent properties • Cardinal values • Virtues • Value of family <p>Recall: “certainty” blocked Michael Shermer.</p> <p><small>* Presented by Dr. Kelley (2009) in his talk on The Future of Objectivism at Free Minds '09</small></p>
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Fifth weakness: The implications of Objectivism are very difficult to sell in today's society. Earlier at this conference, David Kelley talked about “the three hard nuts” for Objectivism to sell: atheism, egoism and laissez-faire capitalism. There may not be anything more difficult to sell than these three because so much explaining is required. To sell any one of these involves dealing with a number of related topics. If Bernie Madoff were an atheist, he might be considered by non-Objectivists as a poster child for Objectivism. [These non-Objectivists could argue that Bernie is probably an atheist (he obviously has no sense of moral responsibility), he is certainly an “egoist” (greed is good) and he is certainly “laissez-faire” (grab what you can). Given this caricature, Objectivists could spend a lot of time trying to untangle this. Even Mark Skousen in his closing talk at FreeMinds09 claimed that when Rand said “selfishness”, she meant it in the narrow, egocentric selfish way that most of her opponents think she did.] Objectivists do not see Bernie Madoff as anywhere close to being a proper poster child for Objectivism. But if you are trying to sell Objectivism, if Objectivism is going to be mass-marketed, you really have to think about your product. Does Objectivism have to be sold this way?

Sixth weakness: Open objectivism is active but not flourishing. One of the biggest weaknesses of Objectivism is the resolute silence on the value of family and the status of children. For those of us who have families, for whom having a family is a major part of our lives, this silence is a definite turn-off. Another weakness of Objectivism is the lack of integration with the latest findings in neurology.

Seventh weakness: Objectivism upholds certainty – moral certainty. For Objectivists, this is a major strength – it may be the feature that attracted many Objectivists to Objectivism. This is also one of the issues on David Kelley's list of “open” issues. Specifically David mentioned certainty and proofs. But the Objectivist focus on certainty can be a weakness for others. Ellis ties objectivity with religious dogmatism. Michael Shermer ties objectivity with absolutes and final certainty. Certainty – especially moral certainty – may be a big sticking point for non-Objectivists in accepting Objectivism.

Eighth weakness: Objectivists are aging. At one level, this is true of everyone. Let me just do a survey here. I'm guessing the average age of this group is over 45, maybe 50. That may be a sign of an aging population. It may be that these people were attracted when they were younger and when Objectivism was younger. Is Objectivism approaching a decline as this first cohort passes on? There aren't enough young people here. That is a definite weakness.

<p style="text-align: center;"><small>©2009 FreeMinds 27</small></p> <p>! Marketing Conclusion: Don't expect Objectivism to Grow</p> <hr/> <p>Objectivism's strengths are primarily related to Rand's fiction.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><small>©2009 FreeMinds 28</small></p> <p>! Marketing Recommendation: Find Something Overlooked to Sell</p> <hr/> <p>Objectivism needs to offer readily-acceptable solutions to important social problems.</p> <p>Look for something in Objectivism – <i>like Galt's motor</i> – that is relevant to today's problems.</p> <p>Adopt Hudgins' <i>St. Paul approach</i>*: require less agreement on 'hard-nut' outcomes; focus more on mutually-acceptable fundamentals.</p> <p><small>* 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.</small></p>
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From a marketing perspective, what can Objectivists expect?

- Here is my “most-likely” conclusion. Don't expect Objectivism to grow. Objectivism will not grow any more in the next 50 years than it has in the last 50.
- But a prediction – a forecast – is not destiny. My second point is this. Objectivism needs to offer more *readily acceptable solutions*. Objectivism can't grow if it has to fight for every definition and every principle.

What is there inside Objectivism that is generally and readily acceptable?

Hint #1: Remember in *Atlas Shrugged* when Dagny discovered Galt's motor that was just sitting there on the shelf in the abandoned Twentieth Century Motor factory in Wisconsin? Nobody else had realized what it was. But Dagny appreciated its value to change the world. Is there anything idea or principle within Objectivism that could change the world AND is not adequately appreciate or utilized?

Hint #2: In a previous talk, Ed Hutchins claimed that Paul's version of Christianity succeeded while other variations failed because of Paul's approach. Other Jewish-Christian sects maintained the Jewish dietary restrictions and upheld the Jewish requirement for male circumcision. Paul dropped these two requirements and Paul's version of Christianity flourished. Ed argued that Objectivists should consider adopting the St. Paul approach.

One variation of the St. Paul approach is to require less agreement on the hard nut outcomes. Dropping the requirement of agreement on the three hard-nut outcomes (atheism, egoism and laissez-faire capitalism) would be an extremely “OPEN” Objectivism for some; for others this would be an unacceptable denial of the basic tenants of Objectivism.

Rather than argue at this level, let's focus on any opportunities for Objectivism.

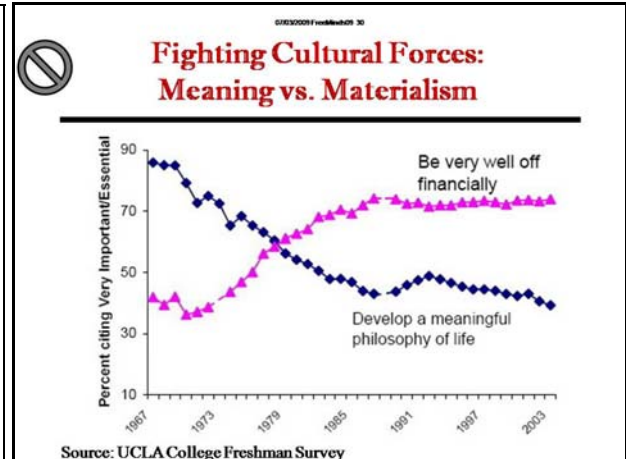
General Opportunities: Big Problems

If you think of Objectivism as a solution, then a big opportunity for Objectivism would be to solve a big problem. So what is a problem for which Objectivism has an answer? Of course there are many such

problems. Just read the columns and stories of Objectivist political commentators. As educated readers, you are well aware of these social and political problems. But what is a really big problem – a problem that affects people in higher education, who are almost immune to this type of thing? What is a problem so big that it affects everyday people in their everyday lives? What is a problem that is big socially and philosophically, and that Objectivism – and only Objectivism – can solve or resolve?

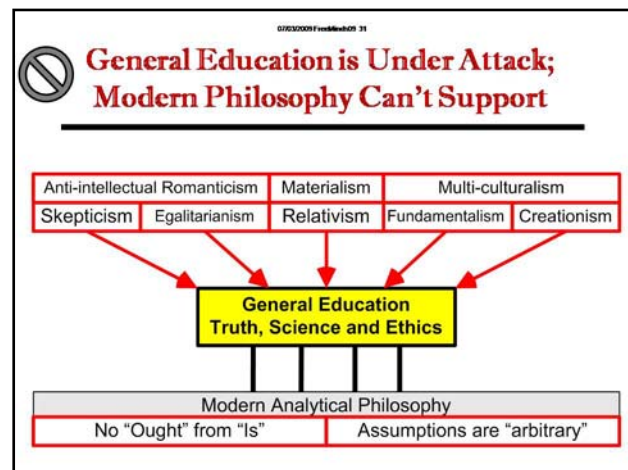
Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics

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



First: Universities have a values problem with their students. College students are less likely to value developing a meaningful philosophy of life. UCLA does a study of freshmen at colleges all across the U.S. Look at what was going on in 1967 when Objectivism and NBI were rapidly growing. Almost 90% of freshmen thought it very important or essential to develop a meaningful philosophy of life. Today, only 30 to 40% agree. On the other hand the percentage that viewed financial security as a major life goal was 30 to 40% in 1967; today it's around 70%. This is a problem for higher education as well as for Objectivism, because the humanities – the liberal arts – are trying to make statements about the human condition. So, this is a very big problem for them.

Second: Universities have a truth and values problem within their disciplines. Colleges and universities want to uphold the notion of “truth.” They want to be able to say that knowledge is a value and honesty is a virtue. They want to be able to say that science is true. They want to be able to say something about ethics. But colleges and universities are relying on modern philosophy. They are being told that you can't get an 'ought' from an 'is' (the “is-ought” problem), that you can't get values from facts, and that assumptions and definitions are arbitrary.



This is not a good foundation for General education, when it is being attacked by all these forces shown in this slide. I already alluded to materialism, but Americans often combine anti-intellectualism with Romanticism. Americans have this anti-intellectual pragmatic streak of, “Aw, don't trust the ivory tower eggheads. Better to trust a good-hearted naïf: someone the average American can relate to.” Ameri-

cans also have an anti-intellectual romantic streak as evidenced in “No child left behind,” and “all children should be at grade level in school.” [I need to acknowledge that I am from Minnesota: the home of Garrison Keillor’s Lake Wobegone where all the children are above average.☺]

Skepticism is another source of difficulty. I’m one of the officers in a critical thinking society. Skepticism is the dominant theme in this organization. The idea of making any ethical statement involving a universal – an absolute – is not permissible among this group of critical thinkers.

As far as analyzing egalitarianism, relativism, fundamentalism, etc., other people have done a better job than I can. I want to focus on a problem that involves science and the need for objectivity in science.

Creationism is a big problem that is likely to get much bigger. You may not agree, but hear me out. Consider this table of data. On the left are the questions asked by the Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life. [These questions are as follows.] Humans and other living things have #1 existed in their present form always, #2 evolved over time. But the survey broke out “evolved over time” into some sub-categories: 2a “guided by a Supreme Being,” 2b “through Natural Selection,” and then 2c “Don’t know.” The first answer, “existed in the present form,” might identify the Young-Earth Creationists. The second group, “evolved over time guided by a Supreme Being,” might identify those who uphold Intelligent Design.

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/>

Let’s take a look at the first column of numbers labeled “All” where they surveyed everybody. In the top row, Young Earth Creationists are 42%. Surveys have shown that percentage to be between 40 and 45% for the last 20 years. Now, move down to the third row, “guided by a Supreme Being” is another 18%. Add those two together and this gives 60%, a majority of the population. Now look at the fourth row, “Evolution through Natural Selection” is just 26%. The bottom two rows, “Don’t Know” total 14%.

Objectivists don’t see the world that way, because most Objectivists are not in the ‘All’ category. Objectivists are typically among those that are college graduates, so let’s focus on the second column. Among those that have a Bachelors degree, 27% uphold Creationism, 20% uphold Intelligent Design, 40% uphold Natural Selection, and 13% “Don’t know.” This is a major problem for modern science.

As long as the first group, the Creationists, and the second group, Intelligent Designers, do not act together, modern science remains intact. But I don’t expect that to continue. The day those two groups agree on tactics is the day that modern science in our public schools is going to see radical change.

This attack on evolution is an attack on modern science. If the theory of evolution can be dismissed as “just a theory”, then so can any theory of modern science. Scientists don’t have a way to defend them-

selves against this kind of attack. Simply counting the number of scientists that uphold evolution makes truth a matter of whatever the majority thinks; this blurs any distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. So defending the theory of evolution is a major problem for modern science.



Young earth creationists defend their views as being a difference in starting points. Here on the left is God’s word leading to some good values. On the right is man’s opinion leading to some bad values. The average citizen might say, “Well, gee, if that were the choice, I wouldn’t support “man’s opinion” if it tolerates or promotes bad values. I’d rather trust something that supports good values, something that has stood the test of time for hundreds or thousands of years.” If that’s the choice (God’s word that upholds the importance of moral values vs. man’s opinion that generally fails to uphold any moral values), why are Objectivists surprised that so many people choose religion over atheism?

Consider two people looking at the same data. At the top of this slide, they are both looking at a skull. That is their input. They have different operating systems. You may like Microsoft, I may like Linux. No one is disregarding reality. People just use different operating systems. According to modern philosophy and according to these young-earth creationists, the choice of operating systems, the choice of initial assumptions, is arbitrary. Thus given the same inputs or facts, their conclusions are very different.

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.

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

Primordial Soup By Daniel Nuckols

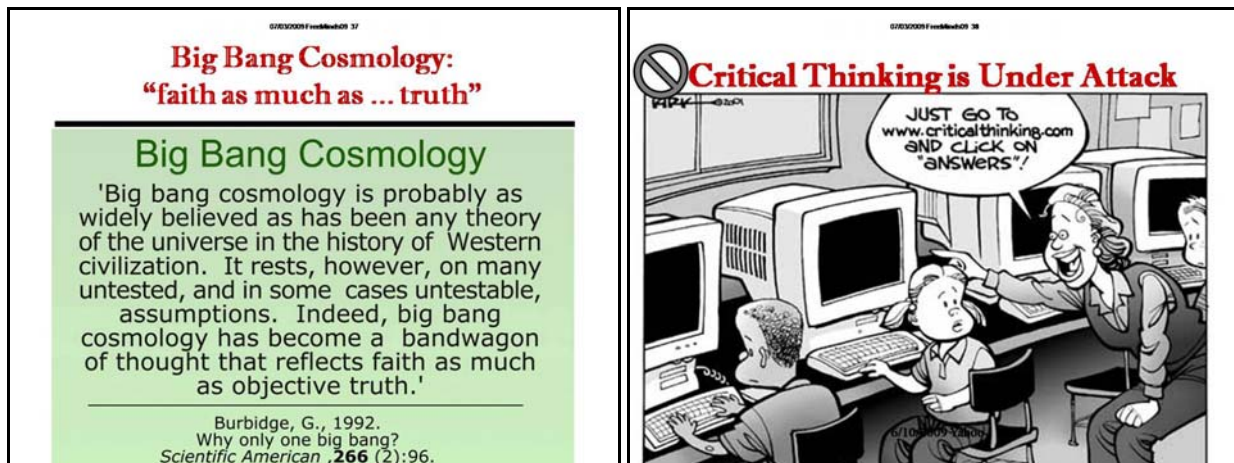
Who said evolution is not a religion? www.danspuit.com

If assumptions are arbitrary, then General Education (Gen Ed) is defenseless. Modern mathematics has certainly encouraged the view that assumptions are arbitrary. This view has infiltrated the social sciences and even statistics. This view says, “Hey, it’s just a starting point. You can’t judge starting points.” So, we’ve got two different starting points. The scientific one says, “Everything has a natural explanation.” The religious one says, “We’re taking the Bible literally or generally true.” But science can’t say the religious assumption is false, since assumptions are arbitrary. This is a major sticking point for any further discussion.

The boundary between science and religion has moved over time. The things that religion held once upon a time—the earth was the center of the universe, etc.—things have shifted; but there’s still a boundary there. Now there may be shift in the other direction – from science to religion. This backward shift is a big problem for higher education because it attacks the nature of science. In the next slide a person is thinking, “I believe there was a Big Bang. I believe we came from the apes. I believe that life began billions of years ago.” The heading asks: “Who said Evolution is not a religion?” One has to carefully parse the difference between “believe” and “know” in order to untangle this.

This “believe vs. know” distinction is not a distinction in most critical thinking textbooks. This distinction is clearly presented in David Kelley’s *The Art of Reasoning*.

Higher education is saying: “We need something in this area. We need some help.” As an entrepreneur, an intellectual entrepreneur, that’s what I’m looking for: somebody that has a big problem that Objectivism – and only Objectivism – can solve.



Consider the big-bang controversy. Here is a *Scientific American* article in '92 where the author says of the big bang “reflects faith as much as truth.” You might want to say, “Well, even science hasn’t “proven” the existence of a big bang with scientific certainty, I want to be able to distinguish between faith and a relatively good explanation.” English may not have the words for the nuanced explanation this needs. And without words to make a clear distinction, those who want to make this distinction may be losing the battle. Objectivism needs someone who can speak and write with clarity at this level.

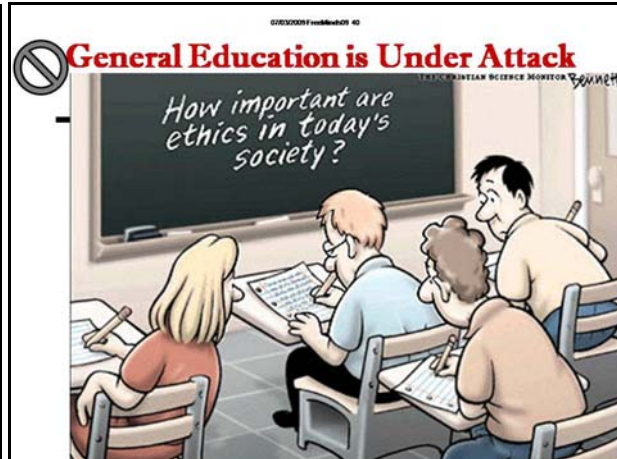
Critical thinking is under attack. Articles on critical thinking in the ERIC database increased in the 80s and early 90s, but decreased after the late 90s. One reason might be that critical thinking didn't have any disciplinary standards. Academics said, "Well, all college faculty think critically, so let's just get rid of any special critical thinking program." Here is another problem that could provide an entrepreneurial opportunity for Objectivism. Could Objectivism help in giving critical thinking some standards?

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).



The American Association of Colleges and Universities (the AACU), which is a strong supporter of the liberal arts, wants to make ethical statements on personal and social responsibility. But they are dimly aware that philosophy says, "You can't do that!" That's privileged." These statements are based on your position as an educated, mainly-white professors. Who's to say that materialism or narcissism are wrong? Who's to say that fanaticism and intolerance are wrong?" The AACU wants to make ethical statements, but they know they are intellectually cut off. Certainly, ethics is under attack. Why is cheating wrong? Is cheating on an ethics exam wrong?

An organization called "New Directions in the Humanities" has recognized that the humanities need a "new direction." They've been holding international conferences. I gave a paper at their 2004 conference in Prado, Italy on what I saw as the most basic problem of the humanities. This is really a threefold problem involving unobservables (human nature), objectivity (how can an "ought claim" about the human condition be validated) and induction (how can one infer generalizations from particulars, how can one infer values from facts, how can one infer ought from is)? These three – unobservables, objectivity and induction – are tied together. The humanities are looking for a solution.

International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities

humanities

29 JUNE - 2 JULY 2010
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES, USA

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*. Prado, Italy.
www.StatLit.org/pdf/2004SchildNDIH.pdf

These problems are common to all disciplines that deal with the real world. So why are these issues such a big problem in the humanities? The humanities are like the canary in the mine. The humanities deal with the human condition, much of which is mental. The mental is something each person experiences directly but has great difficulty describing objectively. The social sciences avoid dealing with human consciousness. They avoid some problems in induction by using randomized studies. Even though the physical sciences don't study human consciousness, they still face the problems of objectivity and induction when dealing with unobservables. Both the physical and social sciences face these problems when the reality in question is based on observational studies.

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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.

Specific Opportunities

I have covered some strengths, weaknesses and general opportunities for Objectivism. What is a big problem in our society that Objectivism might address? I alluded to it in higher education – the problem of objectivity. This is a bigger problem than just education because it affects all of us. Suppose you are talking with other people – some of whom are very strident – dogmatic – about things you think are totally non-objective. Some people would ask, “Why can't we just get along? Why can't everyone be more tolerant? Why can't we just be left alone to live our lives?”

But a lack of objectivity on very basic issues can affect the type of society that we live in. To maximize our potential, to maximize the potential of the best among us, we need to support our social commons: the common goods in our society that support our personal freedoms and the values that are good for everyone. Thus, a lack of objectivity may affect our personal lives. A lack of objectivity may also affect our professional lives. School teachers may be expected to present intelligent design as an objectively plausible explanation of how living things came to be.

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**Objectivity – Being Objective – is
the “Primary Virtue” in Objectivism**

“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**

Our society has a really big problem: how to uphold objectivity, how to make generalizations that are robust in the face of new information when dealing with unobservables? Philosophically, this is the problem of induction – a problem that philosophers have dealt with since the time of Aristotle.

Now, first gold star: the Objectivist epistemology promotes objectivity. You know this, but I want to stress this by arguing that objectivity is the primary virtue in Objectivism – even though objectivity isn't listed as a virtue by Rand. Objectivity is a meta-virtue. It is the virtue upon which all the others depend. If you don't have objectivity, if you don't believe that there is a world beyond one's self and if you don't think that your mind has to relate to this world in certain ways to create knowledge, then you can't identify or communicate anything that is true, relevant or meaningful about that world.



Objectivity is something that most people understand. Objectivity is something that most people consider important. Speaking personally, I can sell objectivity. Some listeners may disagree, but at least I've gotten to first base with most of them. In selling, getting to first base – saying something that people can agree with – is very important. Most people would like to be more objective in their thinking. This is a virtue that we all can share, and it's fundamental.

Objectivity as a process may support different outcomes. You don't get the virtues of tolerance or benevolence by reading *The Virtue of Selfishness*, unless you read it very carefully. But if you go back to objectivity and look at the whole process by which these values are obtained, how man's life *qua man* is the standard of value, then you can see how these extensions may follow. Objectivity tolerates a diversity of outcomes depending on the evidence and integrations on which a higher-level integration is based. This diversity of outcomes is an acceptable evidence-based diversity that stems from our lack of omniscience. This diversity is seen among Objectivists in talking about ethics. What is the standard? Is the standard flourishing or is it man's survival *qua man*? Using the same method, different people can come to slightly different conclusions. That is the sign of a vibrant and open movement.



Consider the virtue of generosity. I don't remember reading about generosity in *The Virtue of Selfishness*. But Tibor Machan has written an entire book on the virtue of generosity.

In summary, Objectivism's focus on objectivity as the cardinal virtue is a tremendous asset.



<p style="text-align: center;"><small>01030001FreeMinds09 47</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Forming Good Generalizations Require Objectivity</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelley: “<i>Universals and Induction</i>” (1988) • Peikoff: “<i>Objectivism Through Induction</i>” • Peikoff: “<i>Induction in Physics & Philosophy</i>” <p>These three talks show the relation between objectivity and generalizations with applications to science and ethics.</p> <p>All three involve induction.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><small>01030001FreeMinds09 48</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Generalizations (Inductions) Some Examples</p> <hr/> <p>Science generalizations (inductions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water runs downhill. • All men are mortal. <p>Ethical generalizations (inductions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man’s basic means of survival is reason. • The right to life is the source of all rights <p style="text-align: right;"><small>Examples from <i>Induction in Physics and Philosophy</i> by L. Peikoff</small></p>
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At this point, I want to focus on objectivity and induction. The three most important advances in this area since *the Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* are Kelley’s “Universals and Induction” (1998), Peikoff’s “Objectivism through Induction,” and Peikoff’s “Induction in Physics and Philosophy.”

Here are some of Peikoff’s insights on induction. The following examples are taken from Leonard’s course on “Induction in Physics and Philosophy.” (This course really made a big impression on me, perhaps because of my academic background. I earned my PhD in space physics.) Suppose you generalize and say “water runs downhill.” A critic of induction might ask, “Have you been to Tibet? Do you know that it runs downhill in Tibet? Well, then, how can you say that water always runs downhill?” Another critic might ask, “Are there some exceptions to your generalization?” Of course there are “exceptions.” If you have a fountain or a hose pointing up, then the water runs up. Oh, but that water is under pressure. Well, supposing I just having it running downhill in a hose under gravity. Could it run back uphill inside a hose? Yes, but gravity is a source of pressure. Can water run uphill without any pressure? In some cases it can due to capillary action. But none of these creates a difference involving geography. One would have to suspend everything one knows to think that water flows uphill in Tibet.



These are all generalizations, but they all have a context. The same thing is true with inductions involving human consciousness. Objectivism holds that reason is man’s basic method of survival. Could you validate this generalization? Could you show how it flows from things you can observe?

This is what my students are doing in the Critical Thinking class. We’re working on inductions. How does one do this, and what are the limits on this sort of thing? This is objectivity. We’re not talking about Rand or formal epistemology. My class uses David Kelley’s book to study definitions. My students don’t see *the Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*. They study how definitions change as the context changes. So stars were defined one way prior to the Copernican Revolution, they were defined another way after the Copernican Revolution and defined a third way once people realized that the Sun and the stars were the same kind of things. My students start by studying induction in forming definitions in varying contexts.

<p style="text-align: center;"><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds09 49</small></p> <p> The Problem of Induction</p> <hr/> <p>How do we know if a generalization is true?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “All swans are white.” This induction is false. <p>How do we know that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water runs downhill [everywhere]? • Man’s basic means of survival is reason.? <p>No formal test or proof of a valid induction.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds09 50</small></p> <p> Solution or Resolution of the Problem of Induction</p> <hr/> <p>“The Problem of Induction has been insolvable for so long because the nature of human consciousness has been misunderstood for so long.</p> <p>To solve the Problem of Deduction, one must grasp that A is A, which is Aristotle’s monumental achievement.</p> <p>But to solve the Problem of Induction, one must grasp one other monumental achievement: Ayn Rand’s theory of concepts.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>Leonard Peikoff, <i>Induction in Physics and Philosophy</i></small></p>
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Consider the way that the Problem of Induction is typically presented. Suppose that all the swans we’ve seen or heard of are white. From this we’ve generalized – induced – that “all swans are white.” Then a black swan walks by. Suddenly our generalization is false. How do we know if our inductions are resilient? That’s very important to know. Knowing this sets the limits of your knowledge. You’ve got to know what the limits of your knowledge are. Somebody might say, “Well, color isn’t a very fundamental characteristic in almost anything,” and the idea that color would be that basic just doesn’t fit with what else I know. So, the fact the black swan walks by from Australia—that’s not a surprise. Whereas “water runs downhill” —and by running, I mean flows freely—there’s nothing, nothing in my background, other than the arbitrary, to say: “there are reasons to hesitate on this generalization.” Everything I know makes this generalization a “necessary conclusion.”

The next slide has quotes from Peikoff’s “Induction in Physics and Philosophy.” He said: “The Problem of Induction has been unsolvable for so long, because we didn’t understand the nature of human consciousness. Deduction is solved with Aristotle’s A is A. We had formal logic. We had the Renaissance. To solve the Problem of Induction, one must grasp one other monumental achievement: Ayn Rand’s theory of concepts.” Leonard and David agree in saying that the problem of induction is basically solved – or resolved – by Rand’s theory of concepts. But it’s a big step from telling people that induction is solved in principle to helping people use induction in making generalizations for use in their daily lives.

<p style="text-align: center;"><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds09 51</small></p> <p> Objectivity is Not Quoting a Book</p> <hr/> <p><i>“A human source of your philosophy is a bad thing, unless that’s just a timesaver that you drop out at a certain point.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">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.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>Leonard Peikoff, Objectivism Through Induction</small></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><small>07/03/2009 FreeMinds09 52</small></p> <p> Finding Objectivity is a Personal Journey</p> <hr/> <p>“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.</p> <p>Those things are fine as maps to point out where to look or to give you an advance report on what she found.</p> <p>But you have to make the trip, be focused on the road and not on her report.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>Leonard Peikoff, Objectivism Through Induction</small></p>
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At an education level, this quote from Leonard Peikoff is the most important thing that I have seen since Rand's *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*.

"A human source of your philosophy is a bad thing, unless that's just a time saver that you drop out at a certain point. It should never be essential to you, when you think of a philosophy, that I wrote a book or gave a lecture, or that Ayn Rand wrote a book. These things [Rand's books] 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. You have to be focused on the road, and not on her report."

To me, this is an entrepreneurial opportunity that may transform the Objectivist movement. Consciously avoiding the phrase, "Rand said" would make Objectivism a very different world.

So, we've gone through the first four items: strengths, weaknesses, problems and solutions. Our world in general has problems, social problems, political and economic problems. Because of these problems our society is becoming more divisive. Objectivism has an epistemology that promotes objectivity, specifically in the areas of science and ethics.

<p style="text-align: center;">Promoting Objectivity in Science and Ethics</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ 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. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Energy was Galt's Motor; Induction is Rand's Motor</p> <hr/> <p>Objectivity in forming ideas is the means by which Ayn Rand discovered everything.</p> <p>Forming generalizations (inductions) objectively was the hall mark of her thinking.</p> <p>If it worked for Ayn Rand, it should work for us.</p>
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Plans for Moving Forward




Objectivism needs to focus on helping other people form objective (evidence-based) inductions. It might be better to use "generalizations" in place of "induction." [My wife says people think of motors when they think of induction.] People need help in forming generalizations in science and in ethics.

Objectivists should look for a motor. Atmospheric energy was Galt's motor. Induction was Rand's motor. That's the motor Objectivists need to use much more and in a different way than they have been doing so far. Forming generalizations was the hallmark of her thinking. This was how she created everything in her philosophy.

It's just too easy to make Objectivism sound like a religion when you say "Rand said..." If that is a shortcut for a derivation, why not demonstrate the process? Suppose I'm teaching physics and my students never did any lab experiments, so they never saw how objects behaved on inclined planes, then my saying "Galileo said this, so that is what makes it true" is the same as a religion! Teaching this way is wrong.

Each person has to see how general principles are based on reality. Each of us has to do this by ourselves in order to decide whether we can trust the process of generalizing when other people are doing it.

Objectivists need to focus more on process, less on outcome: more on the process of thinking objectively and less on the particular outcomes of that process. Let non-Objectivists enjoy thinking, just like Rand did. Let them discover for themselves what a comprehensive view of reason can do. Let them start with slightly different premises based on their experience and let them reach slightly different ends. As a teacher, I am willing to let students generalize to different ends. Instead of starting with “man is a rational animal,” they might start with “man is a social animal,” and get a very different set of conclusions. For me as a teacher, unless I’m teaching a religion, that’s OK. But starting points are not arbitrary. So a next step would be to look closely at a given starting point and see how it integrates through history, through other societies, through other conditions. I’m OK with students making the journey on their own, because that’s the only way they can learn to trust the process. That’s the only way they are going to see the benefit in a process that can be long and hard.

 <p>Focus More on Process; Focus Less on Outcome</p>	 <p>To be Successful <u>Evangelists</u>, Objectivists Need To:</p>
 <p>Let’s enjoy thinking as a process – just like Rand did.</p> <p>Let’s focus more on teaching others how to think more clearly and focus less on scoring their results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Once people recognize the power of man’s mind to reach sound ethical conclusions, our world will be a much better place to live.</p>

Objectivists need to stop preaching Rand and her philosophy. I know Objectivists don’t think they are preaching, but it is all too easy to inadvertently present Objectivism as a religion. It’s just too easy to say, “In *The Virtue of Selfishness*, Rand says...” If you could take that phrase out of your thinking, this might transform Objectivism from looking like a religion to being something that can be successfully marketed.

Objectivists need to sell the virtue and the power of objectivity. Objectivists believe in it. It’s implicit in everything. It comes right off the axioms, almost. Objectivists need to make that virtue explicit. Objectivists need to make that virtue their banner. Hey, objectivity – Objectivism, right? It’s there! It’s essential. Objectivists need to show that objectivity is applicable to ethics as well as to science. Objectivists should teach evidence-based induction.

[One thing that might help is an article or book that focuses on the objectivity of the path from our collective human experience to some of society’s ethical conclusions such as the value of family and the virtues of responsibility, tolerance and modesty. Philosophers certainly address this path but often focus on steps that non-philosophers wouldn’t think of and fail to emphasize steps or elements that non-

philosophers see as most troublesome. For example, Douglas Rasmussen in his FreeMinds09 talk mentioned 10 areas of overlap between Rand's philosophical views and classical philosophy: 1 Metaphysical realism, 2 Moderate realism, 3 Essentialism, 4 Natural Teleology, 5 Self Direction, 6 Assertoric Hypothetical Imperative, 7 Self Perfection, 8 Natural Sociality, 9 Moral and Political Individualism, 10 Natural law and natural rights. Non-philosophers might not understand some of these. And even if they did, they might dismiss some as academic problems. But they might have great difficulty with others: the very idea of #4 (Natural Teleology) when dealing with human beings. E.g., the idea that human nature is the proper basis for determining what human beings ought to do.]

Objectivists need to help other people follow this path in integrating their own experience. One approach would be to start with physical generalizations and indicate why the arbitrary is not admissible in defining or in generalizing. Then examine biological generalizations involving life and values for plants and animals in order to understand the relation between life, the nature of a thing and values for that thing. Then examine generalizations involving human beings, human consciousness and human action. At each stage, help others realize that proper definitions are critical in forming strong generalizations.

Recall that Rand at one time thought the Post Office was a necessary function of the government. If Objectivism can tolerate Rand changing her mind on an implication of thinking objectively, then Objectivism should be able to tolerate a diversity of generalizations in others. I am very aware that there will be lots of differences among people coming from the same base – the same starting point. But if you really uphold an Open Objectivism that is process-based and process-focused, then you're going to see a lot more of this. It's going to be a lot harder to manage and control, but Objectivism might grow much more rapidly.

Objectivists may say, "Well what's left? If marketing objectivity involves less of Rand's ideas such as atheism, egoism, and laissez faire capitalism, have we just gutted the Objectivist philosophy? Is this a compromise on basic philosophical principles?" That's something Objectivists are going to have to sort out. But I think more focus on objectivity is needed if Objectivism is going to get beyond ministering to the Objectivists (or students or Objectivism) and be successful at evangelizing non-Objectivists.

In marketing to newcomers, Objectivism needs to let go of a lot of what it has done for the past 50 years – because if it doesn't, it will have the same limited growth in the next 50 years. Objectivists need to ask, "How can we do a better job of presenting Objectivism to non-Objectivists? How can we help others learn to appreciate the power of objectivity in forming definitions, principles and valid generalizations in both science and ethics?" If Objectivists did this, they wouldn't have to spend so much time redefining Objectivism's specialized use of common terms like egoism, selfishness and laissez-faire capitalism. Objectivists wouldn't have to spend so much time defending themselves against being philosophical supporters of Bernie Madoff. Objectivism could make a lot more progress.

Objectivists could have a happier life for themselves in a society where more people shared objectivity as the primary virtue in both science and in ethics. This could bring about a happier life for us all.

Thank you.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Fred Stitt for organizing Free Minds '09 (www.FreeMinds09.org) with the express purpose of analyzing the “past, present and future of Objectivism.” Fred described this conference by saying, “This conference will explore its achievements, opportunities for its growth, and its potential for the future of humankind.” Fred’s focus on “opportunities for growth” gave me the impetus to prepare this talk.

Thanks to Marsha Enright and Cynthia Schield for editorial suggestions.

Slides currently at www.StatLit.org/pdf/2009SchieldFreeMinds6up.pdf.

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

Schield (2004, New Directions paper) at www.StatLit.org/pdf/2004SchieldNDIH.pdf

Note: This talk is based on Roger Bissell’s transcription of the Haywire recording of my talk. There have been many substantial changes to make a point clearer, to make smoother transition or to include new material that better illustrates a point being made.

Creationism pictures from Answers in Genesis used with permission from AIG. Primordial Soup’s “I believe” cartoon used with permission from artist Dan Nuckols: www.danspulpit.com.

Question-Answer Period

Questioner #1: OK, you want us to look away from these three hard nuts, which you said were atheism, egoism, and laissez-faire.

Schield: Those were David’s. I agree.

Questioner #1: So, we’re going to look away from those and look to the virtue of objectivity and help people go through things on their own. OK. Meanwhile, the President is trying to nationalize healthcare, people are trying to guilt us into doing various things for people who may be related to us...

Schield: I’m not asking the Atlas Society to drop every good thing it’s been doing. But I’d like to think this could be added to what they are doing.

Questioner #1: So, how are we going to go about defending these real values in the ethical and political space, if we’re busy focusing on getting people to go through this long epistemological process that we hope will eventually...

Schield: That’s more sensible from a business perspective. You have battles to fight today, you need to fight them today. Ed needs to stay out there, working. I’m not asking Ed to quit and do something else. No. But the movement needs to allow room for this... Objectivism needs to allow room for it, as an add-on – even if only for the introduction.

Questioner #2: This isn't a question, just a comment. Early on, you were talking about *Atlas Shrugged* being about 250 or so on the Amazon list. That is the hardback edition. The paperback edition, as of an hour ago, for all books, was position #74.

Schild: Thank you. I just picked the top one that came up on the Amazon list when it put it up, and I assumed that was the one that was best-selling. But as Rand said, "Check your premises."

Questioner #3: I'm interested if you have a textbook and further materials about your course.

Schild: [No I don't have a textbook.] What I've got in mind is an add-on to David's book. David's book is well situated for an academic market. I think you want to try creative things off to the side. In my class, students first go through doing inductions in science. Remember in Peikoff's book, he talks about reduction. They start with a general principle. Can you reduce it back down to perceptual? Getting students into that process of shuttling back and forth, that takes time, just like the definitions. So, that to me is a big aspect. And then building up simple inductions with observables, like: water flows downhill, etc. Students realize, "Hey, you can make generalizations. They do have limits, within certain limits it's a universal," that sort of thing. And then taking on the more complex ones.

This last semester, my students took on: "Lying to oneself is bad for oneself." And what they realized is, I have a very unusual class, that some of the people lied to themselves to make themselves happy; others lied to themselves to make themselves bad, feel bad, put themselves down. And the two groups had never thought about lying to themselves the opposite way. OK, now, some of my kids are in a step-up program, etc., and have different issues. So, there are things...you need to start very small. You need a lot of people working on this. One little person at one school with a few ideas can't really generate a whole course on this. But I've been working at it, and will continue to work at it. I'd certainly like to work with other people on this.

Questioner #2: What I'm thinking is an after-school program for high school or junior high students, because a lot of schools are...

Schild: I could see it as an online program. It could be offered through the Atlas Society. There are a lot of ways it could be offered, but it still needs to be worked out, because I ran into so many things [with my students on ideas like lying. Why is it wrong to lie to yourself?] I don't want to get into social lying, all those things. I just want to talk about lying to yourself. It took a long time for them to cut out the lying to other people. I said it, but it took a long time...I didn't realize how long it takes. Until you try things in the classroom, you really don't know what's going to work. [Once this approach has matured, then I think it would be ready for a college course or an after school program.]

Questioner #3: Milo, at least in the last seven or eight years, it's not unusual to talk to somebody who might be sympathetic to Ayn Rand, but then when...but unfortunately a lot of the public face of Objectivism nowadays, led mainly by Yaron Brook, has been a perception that Objectivism supports what in my...what is an increasingly unpopular and in my view very immoral war. What's going to be...what's

going to happen with this? Is the movement going to go down with the war, like the Republican Party, or is it going to return to its principles and...?

Schild: I wouldn't forecast ARI. All I'd say is that ARI has growth with students. That's where they're doing well, etc. I would expect that part to continue. They've got the funds to do it, and so...but at best, it's going to just continue at about that level. I'm looking for a major, a substantial change, to get us out of the level we're at and to move up and to be a bigger player, socially.

Questioner #4: I just want to first of all thank you for a very thoughtful presentation. This is exactly the kind of thinking I think we need in the movement, and I hope everybody will take seriously what you've said. Second thing is just a particular point. I think that sort of in part to answer Alexander's question: well, what about other things, socializing the economy, lots of other bad things are happening. You can talk—this is as a thinker and a scientist—you can use these techniques, and I've tried to, when you're discussing these issues. You can try to, for example, pull people back and say, let's take an example. Let's pull ourselves back from the health care debate, and then give some inductive examples, and then say, where does this take us? You can actually do that in the public fora [note: plural of forum] and try to change people's epistemology, you might say, and I think...it's a technique I try to use sometimes, and I think your points underline the importance of doing exactly that, that these things aren't disconnected. What goes on in...what you might do in a logic course and a critical thinking course has its manifestation in people who write op-eds and who do these kinds of things and who talk at their local Kiwanis clubs and so on and so forth. I want to make that connection there; it's very important.

Schild: Thank you for saying my talk was thoughtful and perhaps valuable. I gave this talk to a local Objectivist group, people that have known each other for 30 years. Before I gave it I could see them saying, "You're advocating giving up all of Objectivism. You are advocating Objectivism-Lite. You've stripped out all the good stuff." I could see them seeing me as a real heretic -- not just a small "tolerance heretic." They might see me as someone who has just gone over to the "Dark Side." And so when they said, "We've tried a lot of things the last 50 years. We haven't seen the growth we expected. We are open." I was amazed. I thought, "OK, that's a green light to push it to the next level." So I very much appreciate your positive feedback on my presentation.

Thanks you.