

live by the mystic doctrine that damned this earth as evil and those who succeeded on earth as depraved. From its start, this country was a threat to the ancient rule of mystics. In the brilliant rocket-explosion of its youth, this country displayed to an incredulous world what greatness was possible to man, what happiness was possible on earth. It was one or the other: America or mystics. The mystics knew it; you didn't. You let them infect you with the worship of need—and this country became a giant in body with a mooching midget in place of its soul, while its living soul was driven underground to labor and feed you in silence, unnamed, unhonored, negated, its soul and hero: the industrialist. Do you hear me now, Hank Rearden, the greatest of the victims I have avenged?

"Neither he nor the rest of us will return until the road is clear to rebuild this country—until the wreckage of the morality of sacrifice has been wiped out of our way. A country's political system is based on its code of morality. We will rebuild America's system on the moral premise which had been its foundation, but which you treated as a guilty underground, in your frantic evasion of the conflict between that premise and your mystic morality: the premise that man is an end in himself, not the means to the ends of others, that man's life, his freedom, his happiness are *his* by inalienable right.

"You who've lost the concept of a right, you who swing in impotent evasiveness between the claim that rights are a gift of God, a supernatural gift to be taken on faith, or the claim that rights are a gift of society, to be broken at its arbitrary whim—the source of man's rights is not divine law or congressional law, but the law of identity. A is A—and Man is Man. *Rights* are conditions of existence required by man's nature for his proper survival. If man is to live on earth, it is *right* for him to use his mind, it is *right* to act on his own free judgment, it is *right* to work for his values and to keep the product of his work. If life on earth is his purpose, he has a *right* to live as a rational being: nature forbids him the irrational. Any group, any gang, any nation that attempts to negate man's rights, is *wrong*, which means: is evil, which means: is anti-life.

"*Rights* are a moral concept—and morality is a matter of choice. Men are free not to choose man's survival as the standard of their morals and their laws, but not free to escape from the fact that the alternative is a cannibal society, which exists for a while by devouring its best and collapses like a cancerous body, when the healthy have been eaten by the diseased, when the rational have been consumed by the irrational. Such has been the fate of your societies in history, but you've evaded the knowledge of the cause. I am here to state it: the agent of retribution was the law of identity, which you cannot escape. Just as man cannot live by means of the irrational, so two men cannot, or two thousand, or two billion. Just as man can't succeed by defying reality, so a nation can't, or a country, or a globe. A is A. The rest is a matter of time, provided by the generosity of victims.

"Just as man can't exist without his body, so no rights can exist without the right to translate one's rights into reality—to think, to work and to keep the results—which means: the right of property.

The modern mystics of muscle who offer you the fraudulent alternative of 'human rights' versus 'property rights,' as if one could exist without the other, are making a last, grotesque attempt to revive the doctrine of soul versus body. Only a ghost can exist without material property; only a slave can work with no right to the product of his effort. The doctrine that 'human rights' are superior to 'property rights' simply means that some human beings have the right to make property out of others; since the competent have nothing to gain from the incompetent, it means the right of the incompetent to own their betters and to use them as productive cattle. Whoever regards this as human and right, has no right to the title of 'human.'

"The source of property rights is the law of causality. All property and all forms of wealth are produced by man's mind and labor. As you cannot have effects without causes, so you cannot have wealth without its source: without intelligence. You cannot force intelligence to work: those who're able to think, will not work under compulsion; those who will, won't produce much more than the price of the whip needed to keep them enslaved. You cannot obtain the products of a mind except on the owner's terms, by trade and by volitional consent. Any other policy of men toward man's property is the policy of criminals, no matter what their numbers. Criminals are savages who play it short-range and starve when their prey runs out—just as you're starving today, you who believed that crime could be 'practical' if your government decreed that robbery was legal and resistance to robbery illegal.

"The only proper purpose of a government is to protect man's rights, which means: to protect him from physical violence. A proper government is only a policeman, acting as an agent of man's self-defense, and, as such, may resort to force *only* against those who *start* the use of force. The only proper functions of a government are: the police, to protect you from criminals, the army, to protect you from foreign invaders; and the courts, to protect your property and contracts from breach or fraud by others, to settle disputes by rational rules, according to *objective* law. But a government that *initiates* the employment of force against men who had forced no one, the employment of armed compulsion against disarmed victims, is a nightmare infernal machine designed to annihilate morality: such a government reverses its only moral purpose and switches from the role of protector to the role of man's deadliest enemy, from the role of policeman to the role of a criminal vested with the right to the wielding of violence against victims deprived of the right of self-defense. Such a government substitutes for morality the following rule of social conduct: you may do whatever you please to your neighbor, provided your gang is bigger than his.

"Only a brute, a fool or an evader can agree to exist on such terms or agree to give his fellow men a blank check on his life and his mind, to accept the belief that others have the right to dispose of his person at their whim, that the will of the majority is omnipotent, that the physical force of muscles and numbers is a substitute for justice, reality and truth. We, the men of the mind, we who are