

his virtue. Moral perfection is an *unbreached rationality*—not the degree of your intelligence, but the full and relentless use of your mind, not the extent of your knowledge, but the acceptance of reason as an absolute.

“Learn to distinguish the difference between errors of knowledge and breaches of morality. An error of knowledge is not a moral flaw, provided you are willing to correct it; only a mystic would judge human beings by the standard of an impossible, automatic omniscience. But a breach of morality is the conscious choice of an action you know to be evil, or a willful evasion of knowledge, a suspension of sight and of thought. That which you do not know, is not a moral charge against you; but that which you refuse to know, is an account of infamy growing in your soul. Make every allowance for errors of knowledge; do not forgive or accept any breach of morality. Give the benefit of the doubt to those who seek to know, but treat as potential killers those specimens of insolent depravity who make demands upon you, announcing that they have and seek no reasons, proclaiming, as a license, that they ‘just feel it’—or those who reject an irrefutable argument by saying: ‘It’s only logic,’ which means: ‘It’s only reality.’ The only realm opposed to reality is the realm and premise of death.

“Accept the fact that the achievement of your happiness is the only *moral* purpose of your life, and that *happiness*—not pain or mindless self-indulgence—is the proof of your moral integrity, since it is the proof and the result of your loyalty to the achievement of your values. Happiness was the responsibility you dreaded, it required the kind of rational discipline you did not value yourself enough to assume—and the anxious staleness of your days is the monument to your evasion of the knowledge that there is no moral substitute for happiness, that there is no more despicable coward than the man who deserted the battle for his joy, fearing to assert his right to existence, lacking the courage and the loyalty to life of a bird or a flower reaching for the sun. Discard the protective rags of that vice which you called a virtue: humility—learn to value yourself, which means: to fight for your happiness—and when you learn that *pride* is the sum of all virtues, you will learn to live like a man.

“As a basic step of self-esteem, learn to treat as the mark of a cannibal any man’s *demand* for your help. To demand it is to claim that your life is *his* property—and loathsome as such claim might be, there’s something still more loathsome: your agreement. Do you ask if it’s ever proper to help another man? No—if he claims it as his right or as a moral duty that you owe him. Yes—if such is your own desire based on your own selfish pleasure in the value of his person and his struggle. Suffering as such is not a value; only man’s fight against suffering, is. If you choose to help a man who suffers, do it only on the ground of his virtues, of his fight to recover, of his rational record, or of the fact that he suffers unjustly; then your action is still a trade, and his virtue is the payment for your help. But to help a man who has no virtues, to help him on the ground of his suffering as such, to accept his faults, his *need*, as a claim—is to accept the mortgage of a zero on your values. A man who has

no virtues is a hater of existence who acts on the premise of death; to help him is to sanction his evil and to support his career of destruction. Be it only a penny you will not miss or a kindly smile he has not earned, a tribute to a zero is treason to life and to all those who struggle to maintain it. It is of such pennies and smiles that the desolation of your world was made.

"Do not say that my morality is too hard for you to practice and that you fear it as you fear the unknown. Whatever living moments you have known, were lived by the values of *my* code. But you stifled, negated, betrayed it. You kept sacrificing your virtues to your vices, and the best among men to the worst. Look around you: what you have done to society, you have done it first within your soul; one is the image of the other. This dismal wreckage, which is now your world, is the physical form of the treason you committed to your values, to your friends, to your defenders, to your future, to your country, to yourself.

"We—whom you are now calling, but who will not answer any longer—we have lived among you, but you failed to know us, you refused to think and to see what we were. You failed to recognize the motor I invented—and it became, in *your* world, a pile of dead scrap. You failed to recognize the hero in your soul—and you failed to know me when I passed you in the street. When you cried in despair for the unattainable spirit which you felt had deserted your world, you gave it my name, but what you were calling was your own betrayed self-esteem. You will not recover one without the other.

"When you failed to give recognition to man's mind and attempted to rule human beings by force—those who submitted had no mind to surrender; those who had, were men who don't submit. Thus the man of productive genius assumed in *your* world the disguise of a playboy and became a destroyer of wealth, choosing to annihilate his fortune rather than surrender it to guns. Thus the thinker, the man of reason, assumed in *your* world the role of a pirate, to defend his values by force against your force, rather than submit to the rule of brutality. Do you hear me, Francisco d'Anconia and Ragnar Danneskjöld, my first friends, my fellow fighters, my fellow outcasts, in whose name and honor I speak?

"It was the three of us who started what I am now completing. It was the three of us who resolved to avenge this country and to release its imprisoned soul. This greatest of countries was built on *my* morality—on the inviolate supremacy of man's right to exist—but you dreaded to admit it and live up to it. You stared at an achievement unequalled in history, and looted its effects and blanked out its cause. In the presence of that monument to human morality, which is a factory, a highway or a bridge—you kept damning this country as immoral and its progress as 'material greed,' you kept offering apologies for this country's greatness to the idol of primordial starvation, to decaying Europe's idol of a leprous, mystic bum.

"This country—the product of *reason*—could not survive on the morality of sacrifice. It was not built by men who sought self-immolation or by men who sought handouts. It could not stand on the mystic split that divorced man's soul from his body. It could not