

a threat? You cry, as he does, that you are counting on our pity, but your secret hope is the moral code that has taught you to count on our *guilt*. You expect us to feel guilty of our virtues in the presence of your vices, wounds and failures—guilty of succeeding at existence, guilty of enjoying the life that you damn, yet beg us to help you to live.

“Did you want to know who is John Galt? I am the first man of ability who refused to regard it as guilt. I am the first man who would not do penance for my virtues or let them be used as the tools of my destruction. I am the first man who would not suffer martyrdom at the hands of those who wished me to perish for the privilege of keeping them alive. I am the first man who told them that I did not need them, and until they learned to deal with me as traders, giving value for value, they would have to exist without me, as I would exist without them; then I would let them learn whose is the need and whose the ability—and if human survival is the standard, whose terms would set the way to survive.

“I have done by plan and intention what has been done throughout history by silent default. There have always been men of intelligence who went on strike, in protest and despair, but they did not know the meaning of their action. The man who retires from public life, to think, but not to share his thoughts—the man who chooses to spend his years in the obscurity of menial employment, keeping to himself the fire of his mind, never giving it form, expression or reality, refusing to bring it into a world he despises—the man who is defeated by revulsion, the man who renounces before he has started, the man who gives up rather than give in, the man who functions at a fraction of his capacity, disarmed by his longing for an ideal he has not found—they are on strike, on strike against unreason, on strike against your world and your values. But not knowing any values of their own, they abandon the quest to know—in the darkness of their hopeless indignation, which is righteous without knowledge of the right, and passionate without knowledge of desire, they concede to you the power of reality and surrender the incentives of their mind—and they perish in bitter futility, as rebels who never learned the object of their rebellion, as lovers who never discovered their love.

“The infamous times you call the Dark Ages were an era of intelligence on strike, when men of ability went underground and lived undiscovered, studying in secret, and died, destroying the works of their mind, when only a few of the bravest of martyrs remained to keep the human race alive. Every period ruled by mystics was an era of stagnation and want, when most men were on strike against existence, working for less than their barest survival, leaving nothing but scraps for their rulers to loot, refusing to think, to venture, to produce, when the ultimate collector of their profits and the final authority on truth or error was the whim of some gilded degenerate sanctioned as superior to reason by divine right and by grace of a club. The road of human history was a string of blank-outs over sterile stretches eroded by faith and force, with only a few brief bursts of sunlight, when the released energy of the men of the mind

performed the wonders you gaped at, admired and promptly extinguished again.

"But there will be no extinction, this time. The game of the mystics is up. You will perish in and by your own unreality. We, the men of reason, will survive.

"I have called out on strike the kind of martyrs who had never deserted you before. I have given them the weapon they had lacked: the knowledge of their own moral value. I have taught them that the world is ours, whenever we choose to claim it, by virtue and grace of the fact that ours is the Morality of Life. They, the great victims who had produced all the wonders of humanity's brief summer, they, the industrialists, the conquerors of matter, had not discovered the nature of their right. They had known that theirs was the power. I taught them that theirs was the glory.

"You, who dare to regard us as the moral inferiors of any mystic who claims supernatural visions—you, who scramble like vultures for plundered pennies, yet honor a fortune-teller above a fortune-maker—you, who scorn a businessman as ignoble, but esteem any posturing artist as exalted—the root of your standards is that mystic iniasma which comes from primordial swamps, that cult of death, which pronounces a businessman immoral by reason of the fact that he keeps you alive. You, who claim that you long to rise above the crude concerns of the body, above the drudgery of serving mere physical needs—who is enslaved by physical needs: the Hindu who labors from sunrise to sunset at the shafts of a hand-plow for a bowl of rice, or the American who is driving a tractor? *Who* is the conqueror of physical reality: the man who sleeps on a bed of nails or the man who sleeps on an inner-spring mattress? *Which* is the monument to the triumph of the human spirit over matter: the germ-eaten hovels on the shorelines of the Ganges or the Atlantic skyline of New York?

"Unless you learn the answers to these questions—and learn to stand at reverent attention when you face the achievements of man's mind—you will not stay much longer on this earth, which we love and will not permit you to damn. You will not sneak by with the rest of your lifespan. I have foreshortened the usual course of history and have let you discover the nature of the payment you had hoped to switch to the shoulders of others. It is the last of your own living power that will now be drained to provide the unearned for the worshippers and carriers of Death. Do not pretend that a malevolent reality defeated you—you were defeated by your own evasions. Do not pretend that you will perish for a noble ideal—you will perish as fodder for the haters of man.

"But to those of you who still retain a remnant of the dignity and will to love one's life, I am offering the chance to make a choice. Choose whether you wish to perish for a morality you have never believed or practiced. Pause on the brink of self-destruction and examine your values and your life. You had known how to take an inventory of your wealth. Now take an inventory of your mind.

"Since childhood, you have been hiding the guilty secret that you feel no desire to be moral, no desire to seek self-immolation, that