

ATLAS SHRUGGED

Ayn Rand

Rand once summed up the premise of her *magnum opus*, *Atlas Shrugged* as "the mind on strike." What if all the producers – scientific pioneers, entrepreneurs, inventors and industrialists – stopped producing? What if they grew tired of bearing the burdens of the welfare of humanity, with nothing to show for it but constant regulatory obstacles, confiscatory taxes and the contempt of politicians, religious moralists and the public at large? What if Atlas, weary of carrying the world on his shoulders, shrugged? Rand shows what the fallout would be in realistic detail and in a way which seems prophetic of the present economic crises in Europe and America.

In the following excerpt, Rand's protagonist John Galt addresses the nation, explaining that the source of their woes is philosophical – their acceptance of the philosophy of altruism.

"For twelve years, you have been asking: Who is John Galt? This is John Galt speaking. I am the man who loves his life. I am the man who does not sacrifice his love or his values. I am the man who has deprived you of victims and thus has destroyed your world, and if you wish to know why you are perishing – you who dread knowledge – I am the man who will now tell you... You have heard it said that this is an age of moral crisis. You have said it yourself, half in fear, half in hope that the words had no meaning. You have cried that man's sins are destroying the world and you have cursed human nature for its unwillingness to practice the virtues you

demanded. Since virtue, to you, consists of sacrifice, you have demanded more sacrifices at every successive disaster. In the name of a return to morality, you have sacrificed all those evils which you held as the cause of your plight. You have sacrificed justice to mercy. You have sacrificed independence to unity. You have sacrificed reason to faith. You have sacrificed wealth to need. You have sacrificed self-esteem to self-denial. You have sacrificed happiness to duty....

"While you were dragging to your sacrificial altars the men of justice, of independence, of reason, of wealth, of self-esteem – I beat you to it, I reached them first. I told them the nature of the game you were playing and the nature of that moral code of yours, which they had been too innocently generous to grasp. I showed them the way to live by another morality – mine. It is mine that they chose to follow. All the men who have vanished, the men you hated, yet dreaded to lose, it is I who have taken them away from you. Do not attempt to find us. We do not choose to be found. Do not cry that it is our duty to serve you. We do not recognize such duty. Do not cry that you need us. We do not consider need a claim. Do not cry that you own us. You don't. Do not beg us to return. We are on strike, we, the men of the mind.

"We are on strike against self-immolation. We are on strike against the creed of unearned rewards and unrewarded duties. We are on strike against the dogma that the pursuit of one's happiness is evil. We are on strike against the doctrine that life is guilt. There is a difference between our strike and all those you've practiced for centuries: our strike consists, not of

making demands, but of granting them. We are evil, according to your morality. We have chosen not to harm you any longer. We are useless, according to your economics. We have chosen not to exploit you any longer. We are dangerous and to be shackled, according to your politics. We have chosen not to endanger you, nor to wear the shackles any longer. We are only an illusion, according to your philosophy. We have chosen not to blind you any longer and have left you free to face reality – the reality you wanted, the world as you see it now, a world without mind....

"We have granted you everything you demanded of us, we who had always been the givers, but have only now understood it. We have no demands to present to you, no terms to bargain about, no compromise to reach. You have nothing to offer us. We do not need you....Yes, this is an age of moral crisis. Yes, you are bearing punishment for your evil. But it is not man who is now on trial and it is not human nature that will take the blame. It is your moral code that's through, this time. Your moral code has reached its climax, the blind alley at the end of its course. And if you wish to go on living, what you now need is not to return to morality – you who have never known any – but to discover it.

"You have heard no concepts of morality but the mystical or the social. You have been taught that morality is a code of behavior imposed on you by whim, the whim of a supernatural power or the whim of society, to serve God's purpose or your neighbor's welfare, to please an authority beyond the grave or else next door – but not to serve your life or pleasure. Your pleasure, you have been

taught, is to be found in immorality, your interests would best be served by evil, and any moral code must be designed not for you, but against you, not to further your life, but to drain it.

"For centuries, the battle of morality was fought between those who claimed that your life belongs to God and those who claimed that it belongs to your neighbors – between those who preached that the good is self-sacrifice for the sake of ghosts in heaven and those who preached that the good is self-sacrifice for the sake of incompetents on earth. And no one came to say that your life belongs to you and that the good is to live it.

"Both sides agreed that morality demands the surrender of your self interest and of your mind, that the moral and the practical are opposites, that morality is not the province of reason, but the province of faith and force. Both sides agreed that no rational morality is possible, that there is no right or wrong in reason – that in reason there's no reason to be moral. Whatever else they fought about, it was against man's mind that all your moralists have stood united. It was man's mind that all their schemes and systems were intended to despoil and destroy. Now choose to perish or to learn that the anti-mind is the anti-life.

"Man's mind is his basic tool of survival. Life is given to him, survival is not. His body is given to him, its sustenance is not. His mind is given to him, its content is not. To remain alive, he must act, and before he can act he must know the nature and purpose of his action. He cannot obtain his food without a knowledge of food and of the way to obtain it. He cannot dig a ditch –or build

a cyclotron – without a knowledge of his aim and of the means to achieve it. To remain alive, he must think.

"But to think is an act of choice. The key to what you so recklessly call 'human nature,' the open secret you live with, yet dread to name, is the fact that man is a being of volitional consciousness. Reason does not work automatically; thinking is not a mechanical process; the connections of logic are not made by instinct. The function of your stomach, lungs or heart is automatic; the function of your mind is not. In any hour and issue of your life, you are free to think or to evade that effort. But you are not free to escape from your nature, from the fact that reason is your means of survival – so that for you, who are a human being, the question 'to be or not to be' is the question 'to think or not to think.'

"A being of volitional consciousness has no automatic course of behavior. He needs a code of values to guide his actions. 'Value' is that which one acts to gain and keep, 'virtue' is the action by which one gains and keeps it. 'Value' presupposes an answer to the question: of value to whom and for what? 'Value' presupposes a standard, a purpose and the necessity of action in the face of an alternative. Where there are no alternatives, no values are possible.

"There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or non-existence – and it pertains to a single class of entities: to living organisms. The existence of inanimate matter is unconditional, the existence of life is not: it depends on a specific course of action. Matter is indestructible, it changes its forms, but it cannot cease to exist. It is only a living organism that

faces a constant alternative: the issue of life or death. Life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action. If an organism fails in that action, it dies; its chemical elements remain, but its life goes out of existence. It is only the concept of 'Life' that makes the concept of 'Value' possible. It is only to a living entity that things can be good or evil...

"Man has no automatic code of survival. His particular distinction from all other living species is the necessity to act in the face of alternatives by means of volitional choice. He has no automatic knowledge of what is good for him or evil, what values his life depends on, what course of action it requires. Are you prattling about an instinct of self-preservation? An instinct of self-preservation is precisely what man does not possess. An 'instinct' is an unerring and automatic form of knowledge. A desire is not an instinct. A desire to live does not give you the knowledge required for living. And even man's desire to live is not automatic: your secret evil today is that (hat is the desire you do not hold. Your fear of death is not a love for life and will not give you the knowledge needed to keep it. Man must obtain his knowledge and choose his actions by a process of thinking, which nature will not force him to perform. Man has the power to act as his own destroyer – and that is the way he has acted through most of his history.

"A living entity that regarded its means of survival as evil, would not survive. A plant that struggled to mangle its roots, a bird that fought to break its wings would not remain for long in the existence they affronted. But the history of man has been a struggle to deny and to destroy his mind. Man has been called a rational

being, but rationality is a matter of choice-and the alternative his nature offers him is: rational being or suicidal animal, Man has to be man – by choice; he has to hold his life as a value-by choice; he has to learn to sustain it – by choice; he has to discover the values it requires and practice his virtues-by choice. A code of values accepted by choice is a code of morality...There is a morality of reason, a morality proper to man, and Man's Life is its standard of value. All that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good; all that which destroys it is the evil.

"Man's life, as required by his nature, is not the life of a mindless brute, of a looting thug or a mooching mystic, but the life of a thinking being – not life by means of force or fraud, but life by means of achievement – not survival at any price, since there's only one price that pays for man's survival: reason. Man's life is the standard of morality, but your own life is its purpose. If existence on earth is your goal, you must choose your actions and values by the standard of that which is proper to man – for the purpose of preserving, fulfilling and enjoying the irreplaceable value which is your life...

"Happiness is the successful state of life, pain is an agent of death. Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one's values. A morality that dares to tell you to find happiness in the renunciation of your happiness – to value the failure of your values-is an insolent negation of morality. A doctrine that gives you, as an ideal, the role of a sacrificial animal seeking slaughter on the altars of others, is giving you death as your standard. By the grace of reality and the nature of life,

man – every man – is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose. But neither life nor happiness can be achieved by the pursuit of irrational whims. Just as man is free to attempt to survive in any random manner, but will perish unless he lives as his nature requires, so he is free to seek his happiness in any mindless fraud, but the torture of frustration is all he will find, unless he seeks the happiness proper to man. The purpose of morality is to teach you, not to suffer and die, but to enjoy yourself and live...

"Sweep aside those hatred-eaten mystics, who pose as friends of humanity and preach that the highest virtue man can practice is to hold his own life as of no value. Do they tell you that the purpose of morality is to curb man's instinct of self-preservation? It is for the purpose of self-preservation that man needs a code of morality. The only man who desires to be moral is the man who desires to live....

"To the extent to which a man is rational, life is the premise directing his actions. To the extent to which he is irrational, the premise directing his actions is death. You who prattle that morality is social and that man would need no morality on a desert island – it is on a desert island that he would need it most. Let him try to claim, when there are no victims to pay for it, that a rock is a house, that sand is clothing, that food will drop into his mouth without cause or effort, that he will collect a harvest tomorrow by devouring his stock seed today – and reality will wipe him out, as he deserves; reality will show him that life is a value to be bought and that

thinking is the only coin noble enough to buy it.

"If I were to speak your kind of language, I would say that man's only moral commandment is: Thou shall think. But a 'moral commandment' is a contradiction in terms. The moral is the chosen, not the forced; the understood, not the obeyed. The moral is the rational, and reason accepts no commandments. My morality, the morality of reason, is contained in a single axiom: existence exists – and in a single choice: to live. The rest proceeds from these. To live, man must hold three things as the supreme and ruling values of his life: Reason – Purpose – Self-esteem. Reason, as his only tool of knowledge – Purpose, as his choice of the happiness which that tool must proceed to achieve – Self-esteem, as his inviolate certainty that his mind is competent to think and his person is worthy of happiness, which means: is worthy of living. These three values imply and require all of man's virtues, and all his virtues pertain to the relation of existence and consciousness: rationality, independence, integrity, honesty, justice, productiveness, pride....

"Independence is the recognition of the fact that yours is the responsibility of judgment and nothing can help you escape it – that no substitute can do your thinking, as no pinch-hitter can live your life – that the vilest form of self-abasement and self-destruction is the subordination of your mind to the mind of another, the acceptance of an authority over your brain, the acceptance of his assertions as facts, his say-so as truth, his edicts as middle-man between your consciousness and your existence.

"Integrity is the recognition of the fact

that you cannot fake your consciousness, just as honesty is the recognition of the fact that you cannot fake existence – that man is an indivisible entity, an integrated unit of two attributes: of matter and consciousness, and that he may permit no breach between body and mind, between action and thought, between his life and his convictions – that, like a judge impervious to public opinion, he may not sacrifice his convictions to the wishes of others, be it the whole of mankind shouting pleas or threats against him – that courage and confidence are practical necessities, that courage is the practical form of being true to existence, of being true to truth, and confidence is the practical form of being true to one's own consciousness.

"Honesty is the recognition of the fact that the unreal is unreal and can have no value, that neither love nor fame nor cash is a value if obtained by fraud – that an attempt to gain a value by deceiving the mind of others is an act of raising your victims to a position higher than reality, where you become a pawn of their blindness, a slave of their non-thinking and their evasions, while their intelligence, their rationality, their perceptiveness become the enemies you have to dread and flee – that you do not care to live as a dependent, least of all a dependent on the stupidity of others, or as a fool whose source of values is the fools he succeeds in fooling – that honesty is not a social duty, not a sacrifice for the sake of others, but the most profoundly selfish virtue man can practice: his refusal to sacrifice the reality of his own existence to the deluded consciousness of others.

"Justice is the recognition of the fact that you cannot fake the character of men as

you cannot fake the character of nature, that you must judge all men as conscientiously as you judge inanimate objects, with the same respect for truth, with the same incorruptible vision, by as pure and as rational a process of identification – that every man must be judged for what he is and treated accordingly, that just as you do not pay a higher price for a rusty chunk of scrap than for a piece of shining metal, so you do not value a rotter above a hero – that your moral appraisal is the coin paying men for their virtues or vices, and this payment demands of you as scrupulous an honor as you bring to financial transactions – that to withhold your contempt from men's vices is an act of moral counterfeiting, and to withhold your admiration from their virtues is an act of moral embezzlement – that to place any other concern higher than justice is to devalue your moral currency and defraud the good in favor of the evil, since only the good can lose by a default of justice and only the evil can profit – and that the bottom of the pit at the end of that road, the act of moral bankruptcy, is to punish men for their virtues and reward them for their vices, that that is the collapse to full depravity, the Black Mass of the worship of death, the dedication of your consciousness to the destruction of existence.

"Productiveness is your acceptance of morality, your recognition of the fact that you choose to live – that productive work is the process by which man's consciousness controls his existence, a constant process of acquiring knowledge and shaping matter to fit one's purpose, of translating an idea into physical form, of remaking the earth in the image of one's values – that all work is creative work fit done by a thinking mind, and no

work is creative if done by a blank who repeats in uncritical stupor a routine he has learned from others – that your work is yours to choose, and the choice is as wide as your mind, that nothing more is possible to you and nothing less is human – that to cheat your way into a job bigger than your mind can handle is to become a fear corroded ape on borrowed motions and borrowed time, and to settle down into a job that requires less than your mind's full capacity is to cut your motor and sentence yourself to another kind of motion: decay – that your work is the process of achieving your values, and to lose your ambition for values is to lose your ambition to live – that your body is a machine, but your mind is its driver, and you must drive as far as your mind will take you, with achievement as the goal of your road – that the man who has no purpose is a machine that coasts downhill at the mercy of any boulder to crash in the first chance ditch, that the man who stifles his mind is a stalled machine slowly going to rust, that the man who lets a leader prescribe his course is a wreck being towed to the scrap heap, and the man who makes another man his goal is a hitchhiker no driver should ever pick up – that your work is the purpose of your life, and you must speed past any killer who assumes the right to stop you, that any value you might find outside your work, any other loyalty or love, can be only travelers you choose to share your journey and must be travelers going on their own power in the same direction.

"Pride is the recognition of the fact that you are your own highest value and, like all of man's values, it has to be earned – that of any achievements open to you, the one that makes all others possible is

the creation of your own character – that your character, your actions, your desires, your emotions are the products of the premises held by your mind – that as man must produce the physical values he needs to sustain his life, so he must acquire the values of character that make his life worth sustaining – that as man is a being of self-made wealth, so he is a being of self-made soul – that to live requires a sense of self-value, but man, who has no automatic values, has no automatic sense of self-esteem and must earn it by shaping his soul in the image of his moral ideal, in the image of Man, the rational being he is born able to create, but must create by choice – that the first precondition of self-esteem is that radiant selfishness of soul which desires the best in all things, in values of matter and spirit, a soul that seeks above all else to achieve its own moral perfection, valuing nothing higher than itself – and that the proof of an achieved self-esteem is your soul's shudder of contempt and rebellion against the role of a sacrificial animal, against the vile impertinence of any creed that proposes to immolate the irreplaceable value which is your consciousness and the incomparable glory which is your existence to the blind evasions and the stagnant decay of others.

"... His own happiness is man's only moral purpose, but only his own virtue can achieve it. Virtue is not an end in itself. Virtue is not its own reward or sacrificial fodder for the reward of evil. Life is the reward of virtue – and happiness is the goal and the reward of life.

"Just as your body has two fundamental sensations, pleasure and pain, as signs of its welfare or injury, as a barometer of

its basic alternative, life or death, so your consciousness has two fundamental emotions, joy and suffering, in answer to the same alternative. Your emotions are estimates of that which furthers your life or threatens it, lightning calculators giving you a sum of your profit or loss. You have no choice about your capacity to feel that something is good for you or evil, but what you will consider good or evil, what will give you joy or pain, what you will love or hate, desire or fear, depends on your standard of value. Emotions are inherent in your nature, but their content is dictated by your mind. Your emotional capacity is an empty motor, and your values are the fuel with which your mind fills it. If you choose a mix of contradictions, it will clog your motor, corrode your transmission and wreck you on your first attempt to move with a machine which you, the driver, have corrupted.

"If you hold the irrational as your standard of value and the impossible as your concept of the good, if you long for rewards you have not earned, for a fortune or a love you don't deserve, for a loophole in the law of causality, for an A that becomes non-A at your whim, if you desire the opposite of existence – you will reach it. Do not cry, when you reach it, that life is frustration and that happiness is impossible to man; check your fuel: it brought you where you wanted to go.

"Happiness is not to be achieved at the command of emotional whims. Happiness is not the satisfaction of whatever irrational wishes you might blindly attempt to indulge. Happiness is a state of non contradictory joy – a joy without penalty or guilt, a joy that does not clash with any of your values and

does not work for your own destruction, not the joy of escaping from your mind, but of using your mind's fullest power, not the joy of faking reality, but of achieving values that are real, not the joy of a drunkard, but of a producer. Happiness is possible only to a rational man, the man who desires nothing but rational goals, seeks nothing but rational values and finds his joy in nothing but rational actions.

"Just as I support my life, neither by robbery nor alms, but by my own effort, so I do not seek to derive my happiness from the injury or the favor of others, but earn it by my own achievement. Just as I do not consider the pleasure of others as the goal of my life, so I do not consider my pleasure as the goal of the lives of others. Just as there are no contradictions in my values and no conflicts among my desires – so there are no victims and no conflicts of interest among rational men, men who do not desire the unearned and do not view one another with a cannibal's lust, men who neither make sacrifices nor accept them.

"The symbol of all relationships among such men, the moral symbol of respect for human beings, is the trader. We, who live by values, not by loot, are traders, both in matter and in spirit. A trader is a man who earns what he gets and does not give or take the undeserved. A trader does not ask to be paid for his failures, nor does he ask to be loved for his flaws, A trader does not squander his body as fodder or his soul as alms. Just as he does not give his work except in trade for material values, so he does not give the values of his spirit – his love, his friendship, his esteem – except in payment and in trade for human virtues,

in payment for his own selfish pleasure, which he receives from men he can respect. The mystic parasites who have, throughout the ages, reviled the traders and held them in contempt, while honoring the beggars and the looters, have known the secret motive of their sneers: a trader is the entity they dread – a man of justice.

"Do you ask what moral obligation I owe to my fellow men? None – except the obligation I owe to myself, to material objects and to all of existence: rationality. I deal with men as my nature and theirs demands: by means of reason. I seek or desire nothing from them except such relations as they care to enter of their own voluntary choice.

"It is only with their mind that I can deal and only for my own self interest, when they see that my interest coincides with theirs. When they don't, I enter no relationship; I let dissenters go their way and I do not swerve from mine. I win by means of nothing but logic and I surrender to nothing but logic. I do not surrender my reason or deal with men who surrender theirs. I have nothing to gain from fools or cowards; I have no benefits to seek from human vices: from stupidity, dishonesty or fear. The only value men can offer me is the work of their mind. When I disagree with a rational man, I let reality be our final arbiter; if I am right, he will learn; if I am wrong, I will; one of us will win, but both will profit.

"Whatever may be open to disagreement, there is one act of evil that may not, the act that no man may commit against others and no man may sanction or forgive. So long as men desire to live together, no man may

initiate – do you hear me? no man may start – the use of physical force against others. To interpose the threat of physical destruction between a man and his perception of reality, is to negate and paralyze his means of survival; to force him to act against his own judgment, is like forcing him to act against his own sight. Whoever, to whatever purpose or extent, initiates the use of force, is a killer acting on the premise of death in a manner wider than murder: the premise of destroying man's capacity to live.

"Do not open your mouth to tell me that your mind has convinced you of your right to force my mind. Force and mind are opposites; morality ends where a gun begins. When you declare that men are irrational animals and propose to treat them as such, you define thereby your own character and can no longer claim the sanction of reason – as no advocate of contradictions can claim it. There can be no 'right' to destroy the source of rights, the only means of judging right and wrong: the mind.

"To force a man to drop his own mind and to accept your will as a substitute, with a gun in place of a syllogism, with terror in place of proof, and death as the final argument – is to attempt to exist in defiance of reality. Reality demands of man that he act for his own rational interest; your gun demands of him that he act against it. Reality threatens man with death if he does not act on his rational judgment; you threaten him with death if he does. You place him into a world where the price of his life is the surrender of all the virtues required by life – and death by a process of gradual destruction is all that you and your system will achieve, when death is made to be the ruling power, the winning

argument in a society of men.

"Be it a highwayman who confronts a traveler with the ultimatum: 'Your money or your life,' or a politician who confronts a country with the ultimatum: 'Your children's education or your life,' the meaning of that ultimatum is: 'Your mind or your life' – and neither is possible to man without the other.

"If there are degrees of evil, it is hard to say who is the more contemptible: the brute who assumes the right to force the mind of others or the moral degenerate who grants to others the right to force his mind. That is the moral absolute one does not leave open to debate. I do not grant the terms of reason to men who propose to deprive me of reason. I do not enter discussions with neighbors who think they can forbid me to think. I do not place my moral sanction upon a murderer's wish to kill me. When a man attempts to deal with me by force, I answer him – by force. It is only as retaliation that force may be used and only against the man who starts its use. No, I do not share his evil or sink to his concept of morality: I merely grant him his choice, destruction, the only destruction he had the right to choose: his own. He uses force to seize a value; I use it only to destroy destruction. A holdup man seeks to gain wealth by killing me; I do not grow richer by killing a holdup man. I seek no values by means of evil, nor do I surrender my values to evil.

"In the name of all the producers who had kept you alive and received your death ultimatums in payment, I now answer you with a single ultimatum of our own: Our work or your guns. You can choose either; you can't have both.

We do not initiate the use of force against others or submit to force at their hands. If you desire ever again to live in an industrial society, it will be on our moral terms. Our terms and our motive power are the antithesis of yours. You have been using fear as your weapon and have been bringing death to man as his punishment for rejecting your morality. We offer him life as his reward for accepting ours...

"As products of the split between man's soul and body, there are two kinds of teachers of the Morality of Death: the mystics of spirit and the mystics of muscle, whom you call the spiritualists and the materialists, those who believe in consciousness without existence and those who believe in existence without consciousness. Both demand the surrender of your mind, one to their revelations, the other to their reflexes. No matter how loudly they posture in the roles of irreconcilable antagonists, their moral codes are alike, and so are their aims: in matter – the enslavement of man's body, in spirit – the destruction of his mind.

"The good, say the mystics of spirit, is God, a being whose only definition is that he is beyond man's power to conceive – a definition that invalidates man's consciousness and nullifies his concepts of existence. The good, say the mystics of muscle, is Society – a thing which they define as an organism that possesses no physical form, a super-being embodied in no one in particular and everyone in general except yourself. Man's mind, say the mystics of spirit, must be subordinated to the will of God, Man's mind, say the mystics of muscle, must be subordinated to the will of Society. Man's standard of value, say the

mystics of spirit, is the pleasure of God, whose standards are beyond man's power of comprehension and must be accepted on faith. Man's standard of value, say the mystics of muscle, is the pleasure of Society, whose standards are beyond man's right of judgment and must be obeyed as a primary absolute. The purpose of man's life, say both, is to become an abject zombie who serves a purpose he does not know, for reasons he is not to question. His reward, say the mystics of spirit, will be given to him beyond the grave. His reward, say the mystics of muscle, will be given on earth – to his great-grandchildren.

"Selfishness – say both – is man's evil. Man's good – say both – is to give up his personal desires, to deny himself, renounce himself, surrender; man's good is to negate the life he lives. Sacrifice – cry both – is the essence of morality, the highest virtue within man's reach.

"Whoever is now within reach of my voice, whoever is man the victim, not man the killer, I am speaking at the deathbed of your mind, at the brink of that darkness in which you're drowning, and if there still remains within you the power to struggle to hold on to those fading sparks which had been yourself – use it now. The word that has destroyed you is 'sacrifice.' Use the last of your strength to understand its meaning. You're still alive. You have a chance.

" 'Sacrifice' does not mean the rejection of the worthless, but of the precious. 'Sacrifice' does not mean the rejection of the evil for the sake of the good, but of the good for the sake of the evil. 'Sacrifice' is the surrender of that which you value in favor of that which you don't.

"If you exchange a penny for a dollar, it is not a sacrifice; if you exchange a dollar for a penny, it is. If you achieve the career you wanted, after years of struggle, it is not a sacrifice; if you then renounce it for the sake of a rival, it is. If you own a bottle of milk and give it to your starving child, it is not a sacrifice; if you give it to your neighbor's child and let your own die, it is.

"If you give money to help a friend, it is not a sacrifice; if you give it to a worthless stranger, it is. If you give your friend a sum you can afford, it is not a sacrifice; if you give him money at the cost of your own discomfort, it is only a partial virtue, according to this sort of moral standard; if you give him money at the cost of disaster to yourself – that is the virtue of sacrifice in full.

"If you renounce all personal desires and dedicate your life to those you love, you do not achieve full virtue: you still retain a value of your own, which is your love. If you devote your life to random strangers, it is an act of greater virtue. If you devote your life to serving men you hate –that is the greatest of the virtues you can practice, "A sacrifice is the surrender of a value. Full sacrifice is full surrender of all values. If you wish to achieve full virtue, you must seek no gratitude in return for your sacrifice, no praise, no love, no admiration, no self-esteem, not even the pride of being virtuous; the faintest trace of any gain dilutes your virtue. If you pursue a course of action that does not taint your life by any joy, that brings you no value in matter, no value in spirit, no gain, no profit, no reward – if you achieve this state of total zero, you have achieved the ideal of moral perfection.

"You are told that moral perfection is impossible to man – and, by this standard, it is. You cannot achieve it so long as you live, but the value of your life and of your person is gauged by how closely you succeed in approaching that ideal zero which is death...

"If you wish to save the last of your dignity, do not call your best actions a 'sacrifice': that term brands you as immoral. If a mother buys food for her hungry child rather than a hat for herself, it is not a sacrifice: she values the child higher than the hat; but it is a sacrifice to the kind of mother whose higher value is the hat, who would prefer her child to starve and feeds him only from a sense of duty. If a man dies fighting for his own freedom, it is not a sacrifice: he is not willing to live as a slave; but it is a sacrifice to the kind of man who's willing. If a man refuses to sell his convictions, it is not a sacrifice, unless he is the sort of man who has no convictions.

"Sacrifice could be proper only for those who have nothing to sacrifice – no values, no standards, no judgment – those whose desires are irrational whims, blindly conceived and lightly surrendered. For a man of moral stature, whose desires are born of rational values, sacrifice is the surrender of the right to the wrong, of the good to the evil.

"The creed of sacrifice is a morality for the immoral – a morality that declares its own bankruptcy by confessing that it can't impart to men any personal stake in virtues or values, and that their souls are sewers of depravity, which they must be taught to sacrifice. By its own confession, it is impotent to teach men to

be good and can only subject them to constant punishment.

"Are you thinking, in some foggy stupor, that it's only material values that your morality requires you to sacrifice? And what do you think are material values? Matter has no value except as a means for the satisfaction of human desires. Matter is only a tool of human values. To what service are you asked to give the material tools your virtue has produced? To the service of that which you regard as evil: to a principle you do not share, to a person you do not respect, to the achievement of a purpose opposed to your own – else your gift is not a sacrifice...

"This much is true: the most selfish of all things is the independent mind that recognizes no authority higher than its own and no value higher than its judgment of truth. You are asked to sacrifice your intellectual integrity, your logic, your reason, your standard of truth –
in favor of becoming a prostitute whose standard is the greatest good for the greatest number.

"If you search your code for guidance, for an answer to the question: 'What is the good?' – the only answer you will find is 'The good of others.' The good is whatever others wish, whatever you feel they feel they wish, or whatever you feel they ought to feel. 'The good of others' is a magic formula that transforms anything into gold, a formula to be recited as a guarantee of moral glory and as a fumigator for any action, even the slaughter of a continent. Your standard of virtue is not an object, not an act, not a principle, but an intention. You need no proof, no reasons, no success, you

need not achieve in fact the good of others – all you need to know is that your motive was the good of others, not your own. Your only definition of the good is a negation: the good is the 'non-good for me.'

"Your code – which boasts that it upholds eternal, absolute, objective moral values and scorns the conditional, the relative and the subjective – your code hands out, as its version of the absolute, the following rule of moral conduct: If you wish it, it's evil; if others wish it, it's good; if the motive of your action is your welfare, don't do it; if the motive is the welfare of others, then anything goes.

"As this double-jointed, double-standard morality splits you in half, so it splits mankind into two enemy camps: one is you, the other is all the rest of humanity. You are the only outcast who has no right to wish or live. You are the only servant, the rest are the masters, you are the only giver, the rest are the takers, you are the eternal debtor, the rest are the creditors never to be paid off. You must not question their right to your sacrifice, or the nature of their wishes and their needs: their right is conferred upon them by a negative, by the fact that they are 'non-you.'

"For those of you who might ask questions, your code provides a consolation prize and booby-trap: it is for your own happiness, it says, that you must serve the happiness of others, the only way to achieve your joy is to give it up to others, the only way to achieve your prosperity is to surrender your wealth to others, the only way to protect your life is to protect all men except yourself – and if you find no joy in this

procedure, it is your own fault and the proof of your evil; if you were good, you would find your happiness in providing a banquet for others, and your dignity in existing on such crumbs as they might care to toss you.

"You who have no standard of self-esteem, accept the guilt and dare not ask the questions. But you know the unadmitted answer, refusing to acknowledge what you see, what hidden premise moves your world. You know it, not in honest statement, but as a dark uneasiness within you, while you flounder between guiltily cheating and grudgingly practicing a principle too vicious to name.

"I, who do not accept the unearned, neither in values nor in guilt, am here to ask the questions you evaded. Why is it moral to serve the happiness of others, but not your own? If enjoyment is a value, why is it moral when experienced by others, but immoral when experienced by you? If the sensation of eating a cake is a value, why is it an immoral indulgence in your stomach, but a moral goal for you to achieve in the stomach of others? Why is it immoral for you to desire, but moral for others to do so? Why is it immoral to produce a value and keep it, but moral to give it away? And if it is not moral for you to keep a value, why is it moral for others to accept it? If you are selfless and virtuous when you give it, are they not selfish and vicious when they take it? Does virtue consist of serving vice? Is the moral purpose of those who are good, self-immolation for the sake of those who are evil?

'The answer you evade, the monstrous answer is: No, the takers are not evil,

provided they did not earn the value you gave them. It is not immoral for them to accept it, provided they are unable to produce it, unable to deserve it, unable to give you any value in return. It is not immoral for them to enjoy it, provided they do not obtain it by right.

"Such is the secret core of your creed, the other half of your double standard: it is immoral to live by your own effort, but moral to live by the effort of others – it is immoral to consume your own product, but moral to consume the products of others – it is immoral to earn, but moral to mooch – it is the parasites who are the moral justification for the existence of the producers, but the existence of the parasites is an end in itself – it is evil to profit by achievement, but good to profit by sacrifice-it is evil to create your own happiness, but good to enjoy it at the price of the blood of others.

"Your code divides mankind into two castes and commands them to live by opposite rules: those who may desire anything and those who may desire nothing, the chosen and the damned, the riders and the carriers, the eaters and the eaten. What standard determines your caste? What passkey admits you to the moral elite? The passkey is lack of value...

"Under a morality of sacrifice, the first value you sacrifice is morality; the next is self-esteem. When need is the standard, every man is both victim and parasite. As a victim, he must labor to fill the needs of others, leaving himself in the position of a parasite whose needs must be filled by others. He cannot approach his fellow men except in one of two disgraceful roles: he is both a

beggar and a sucker.

"You fear the man who has a dollar less than you, that dollar is rightfully his, he makes you feel like a moral defrauder. You hate the man who has a dollar more than you, that dollar is rightfully yours, he makes you feel that you are morally defrauded. The man below is a source of your guilt, the man above is a source of your frustration. You do not know what to surrender or demand, when to give and when to grab, what pleasure in life is rightfully yours and what debt is still unpaid to others – you struggle to evade, as 'theory,' the knowledge that by the moral standard you've accepted you are guilty every moment of your life, there is no mouthful of food you swallow that is not needed by someone somewhere on earth – and you give up the problem in blind resentment, you conclude that moral perfection is not to be achieved or desired, that you will muddle through by snatching as snatch can and by avoiding the eyes of the young, of those who look at you as if self-esteem were possible and they expected you to have it. Guilt is all that you retain within your soul – and so does every other man, as he goes past, avoiding your eyes. Do you wonder why your morality has not achieved brotherhood on earth or the good will of man to man?

"The justification of sacrifice, that your morality propounds, is more corrupt than the corruption it purports to justify. The motive of your sacrifice, it tells you, should be love – the love you ought to feel for every man. A morality that professes the belief that the values of the spirit are more precious than matter, a morality that teaches you to scorn a whore who gives her body indiscriminately to all men – this same

morality demands that you surrender your soul to promiscuous love for all comers...

"You propose to establish a social order based on the following tenets: that you're incompetent to run your own life, but competent to run the lives of others – that you're unfit to exist in freedom, but fit to become an omnipotent ruler – that you're unable to earn your living by the use of your own intelligence, but able to judge politicians and to vote them into jobs of total power over arts you have never seen, over sciences you have never studied, over achievements of which you have no knowledge, over the gigantic industries where you, by your own definition of your capacity, would be unable successfully to fill the job of assistant greaser.

"This idol of your cult of zero-worship, this symbol of impotence – the congenital dependent – is your image of man and your standard of value, in whose likeness you strive to refashion your soul. 'It's only human,' you cry in defense of any depravity, reaching the stage of self-abasement where you seek to make the concept 'human' mean the weakling, the fool, the rotter, the liar, the failure, the coward, the fraud, and to exile from the human race the hero, the thinker, the producer, the inventor, the strong, the purposeful, the pure – as if 'to feel' were human, but to think were not, as if to fail were human, but to succeed were not, as if corruption were human, but virtue were not – as if the premise of death were proper to man, but the premise of life were not.

"In order to deprive us of honor, that you may then deprive us of our wealth, you have always regarded us as slaves who

deserve no moral recognition. You praise any venture that claims to be nonprofit, and damn the men who made the profits that make the venture possible. You regard as 'in the public interest' any project serving those who do not pay; it is not in the public interest to provide any services for those who do the paying. 'Public benefit' is anything given as alms; to engage in trade is to injure the public. 'Public welfare' is the welfare of those who do not earn it; those who do, are entitled to no welfare. 'The public,' to you, is whoever has failed to achieve any virtue or value; whoever achieves it, whoever provides the goods you require for survival, ceases to be regarded as part of the public or as part of the human race...

"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 miasma 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?...

"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...

"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 traders not masters or slaves, do not deal in blank checks or grant them. We do not live or work with any form of the non-objective.

"So long as men, in the era of savagery, had no concept of objective reality and believed that physical nature was ruled by the whim of unknowable demons – no thought, no science, no production were possible. Only when men discovered that nature was a firm, predictable absolute were they able to rely on their knowledge, to choose their course, to plan their future and, slowly, to rise from the cave. Now you have placed modern industry, with its immense complexity of scientific precision, back into the power of unknowable demons – the unpredictable power of the arbitrary whims of hidden, ugly little bureaucrats. A farmer will not invest the effort of one summer if he's unable to calculate his chances of a harvest. But you expect industrial giants – who plan in terms of decades, invest in terms of generations and undertake ninety-nine-year contracts – to continue to function and produce, not knowing what random caprice in the skull of what random official will descend upon them at what moment to demolish the whole of their effort. Drifters and physical laborers live and plan by the range of a day. The better the mind, the longer the range. A man whose vision extends to a shanty, might continue to build on your quicksands, to grab a fast profit and run. A man who envisions skyscrapers, will not. Nor will he give ten years of unswerving devotion to the task of inventing a new product, when he knows that gangs of entrenched mediocrity are juggling the laws against him, to tie

him,, restrict him and force him to fail, but should he fight them and struggle and succeed, they will seize his rewards and his invention...

"In proportion to the mental energy he spent, the man who creates a new invention receives but a small percentage of his value in terms of material payment, no matter what fortune he makes, no matter what millions he earns. But the man who works as a janitor in the factory producing that invention, receives an enormous payment in proportion to the mental effort that his job requires of him. And the same is true of all men between, on all levels of ambition and ability. The man at the top of the intellectual pyramid contributes the most to all those below him, but gets nothing except his material payment, receiving no intellectual bonus from others to add to the value of his time. The man at the bottom who, left to himself, would starve in his hopeless ineptitude, contributes nothing to those above him, but receives the bonus of all of their brains. Such is the nature of the 'competition' between the strong and the weak of the intellect. Such is the pattern of 'exploitation' for which you have damned the strong.

"Such was the service we had given you and were glad and willing to give. What did we ask in return? Nothing but freedom. We required that you leave us free to function – free to think and to work as we choose – free to take our own risks and to bear our own losses – free to earn our own profits and to make our own fortunes – free to gamble on your rationality, to submit our products to your judgment for the purpose of a voluntary trade, to rely on the objective

value of our work and on your mind's ability to see it – free to count on your intelligence and honesty, and to deal with nothing but your mind. Such was the price we asked, which you chose to reject as too high. You decided to call it unfair that we, who had dragged you out of your hovels and provided you with modern apartments, with radios, movies and cars, should own our palaces and yachts – you decided that you had a right to your wages, but we had no right to our profits, that you did not want us to deal with your mind, but to deal, instead, with your gun...

"The last of my words will be addressed to those heroes who might still be hidden in the world, those who are held prisoner, not by their evasions, but by their virtues and their desperate courage. My brothers in spirit, check on your virtues and on the nature of the enemies you're serving. Your destroyers hold you by means of your endurance, your generosity, your innocence, your love – the endurance that carries their burdens – the generosity that responds to their cries of despair – the innocence that is unable to conceive of their evil and gives them the benefit of every doubt... Fight for the value of your person. Fight for the virtue of your pride. Fight for the essence of that which is man: for his sovereign rational mind. Fight with the radiant certainty and the absolute rectitude of knowing that yours is the Morality of Life and that yours is the battle for any achievement, any value, any grandeur, any goodness, any joy that has ever existed on this earth.

"You will win when you are ready to pronounce the oath I have taken at the start of my battle – and for those who wish to know the day of my return, I

shall now repeat it to the hearing of the world: "I swear – by my life and my love of it – that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the difference between the creator and the second-hander, giving examples of each. Which are you? Which do you aspire to be?
2. How would one of Rand's "second-handers" or "parasites" respond to Roark's speech?
3. Is Rand overly cynical about the motives of "do-gooders?" What does she imply about them? How do altruistic motives harm those who have them as well as those who seem to benefit from them?
4. According to John Galt, what's wrong with sacrifice? How is altruistic sacrifice different from simple benevolence and good will towards others?
5. Describe the social and mystical theories of morality and give examples of each.
6. Where do values come from according to Galt? Why does Man need them?
7. How does Galt argue that the phrase "moral commandment" a contradiction in terms?
8. How does Rand's account of morality differ from Glaucon's? In particular, how does she argue, through Galt, that virtues such as independence, integrity, honesty, justice, productiveness and self-respect

actually serve self-interest?

9. What is the proper role of government according to Galt? What movements or parties today represent Rand's political ideals?

10. According to Galt, where do rights come from?

11. What did you think of the speeches by Rand's protagonists? Were they inspiring? Offensive? Thought-provoking?

12. In *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand seems to suggest that if we would all just pursue our own interests and stop trying to be "do-gooders" (usually with other peoples' money), we would all be better off. Doesn't that make her sound like a utilitarian? She'd just be one who thinks that the best way to maximize utility is for everyone to follow self-interest. How might she respond to this charge?

13. A pragmatic egoist might claim that Rand, with her focus on rights, virtue and justice, is a closet deontologist. How might she defend herself? (Hint: what does Galt mean when he says that the moral is the practical?)