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The Part and Chapter Headings of *Atlas Shrugged*

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At over a thousand pages long and dealing with the fate of a civilization, *Atlas Shrugged* is a story of incredible scope and complexity. Its theme is the role of man's reasoning mind in achieving all the values of his existence. Its plot is driven by a central question, a seeming contradiction: If the men of the mind are the creators and sustainers of man's life, why do they continually lose their battles and witness their achievements siphoned off and destroyed by men who have abandoned their minds? The story focuses on how the men of the mind learn to ask and to answer this question, thereby putting a stop to their own exploitation.

To resolve the apparent contradiction demands of the heroes a ruthless commitment to logic: to identify the problem, learn its fundamental cause, and grasp the path to its solution. To liberate themselves, the men of the mind must discover, understand, and then practice a new set of philosophical principles. And for we as readers to really appreciate the story's progression, the same exacting logical focus is demanded of us. The names of the three parts of *Atlas Shrugged* are certainly a tribute to Aristotle and his discovery of the laws of logic (as Ayn Rand herself describes the three parts in the afterword to *Atlas Shrugged*, "About the Author"). But they are more than this. They name the fundamental logical issue that the events of that part of the story are (and that we as readers should be) focused on. They, in conjunction with the individual chapter headings, serve as guideposts to direct our attention to central issues that must be understood and central contradictions that must be resolved in order to grasp both the mystery and the logic of *Atlas Shrugged*.

Let us explore how this is so.

I will discuss each of the parts and chapters of *Atlas Shrugged* in their chronological order, but I will not be recapping their events. This is not meant to be an exhaustive summary. Think of it more as a study guide. I am assuming familiarity with the events of each part and each chapter: Given that familiarity, I am trying to highlight how the part and chapter headings help integrate those events and thus enable us to gain a deeper understanding of the story and its meaning. (All quotations will be from the part or chapter under discussion, unless otherwise indicated.)

PART I: NON-CONTRADICTION

Part I of *Atlas Shrugged* begins with Eddie Willers' attempt to convince James Taggart, President of Taggart Transcontinental Railroad, to face the considerable problems on its Rio

Norte Line. This line provides service to the last booming area of the United States, the state of Colorado. Part I ends with Ellis Wyatt, the most productive of Colorado's industrialists, setting fire to his oil fields and vanishing.

The main sequence of action in part I is the destruction of the only reliable rail line servicing Colorado, the Phoenix-Durango, and Hank Rearden's and Dagny Taggart's relentless effort to construct a replacement, the John Galt Line, a replacement fully worthy of the explosion of productivity taking place in Colorado. The principal paradox of part I is why Hank and Dagny face such tremendous opposition, from every corner of society, to their attempt to save Colorado, and why, when their desperate struggle eventually succeeds, their achievement and Colorado's are nevertheless so easily, effortlessly destroyed.

As this main line of action unfolds, a multitude of other mysteries and seeming contradictions surface. Why, for instance, does an institution devoted to science, the State Science Institute, denounce the scientific achievement that is Rearden Metal? Why does Jim destroy the Phoenix-Durango, even though this jeopardizes the existence of his own railroad? Why won't Owen Kellogg take the better job that Dagny offers him? Why is the philosopher Hugh Akston working as a cook in a diner? Why did Francisco d'Anconia, who possessed the promise of becoming one of the world's great industrialists, turn into a playboy? Why has Wyatt abandoned his greatest love, his oil fields? Why, in a civilized world, is there a pirate roaming the oceans? Why does it seem like there is a fifth Halley Concerto, one of joy and deliverance, when Richard Halley composed only four? Why was the incomparable achievement of the motor abandoned as though it were worthless scrap? Who is John Galt?

Even wider questions arise. Pitted against the received views on these issues, the events of part I raise questions about who actually are the exploited and the exploiters in society, what really determines who rises to the top and who sinks to the bottom, and what actually is the relation between the spiritual and the material.

Only when Hank and Dagny learn to resolve, in parts II and III, all these questions and apparent contradictions will they understand the fate of the John Galt Line—that is, why, despite Hank and Dagny's enormous life-giving power, their achievement *had* to meet the end it did.

Chapter I: The Theme

Atlas Shrugged is a mystery story, but it contains no false clues or leads. To unravel its mystery requires only philosophical acumen. Indeed, everything essential that is to be discovered is contained in preliminary form here, in the first chapter. As its title suggests, this chapter presages the destruction—and the rebirth—to come.

We get a glimpse, as Eddie Willers walks through the streets of New York City, of decay: bums asking for money, skyscrapers covered in grime, a prosperous street now consisting of one where only a fourth of its shops are out of business. Willers' mood sets the tone. His apprehensive feeling that "your days are numbered" is accurate—this, he and we will later learn, is the consequence of Galt's strike (12). By Galt withdrawing the men of the mind, the world's days *are* numbered. Willers' memory of the oak tree from childhood—his feeling of safety from its enormous vitality and strength, and his feeling of betrayal upon discovering it to be an "empty shell," its "heart . . . rotted away long ago"—is not a causeless memory (5). The oak tree is what Taggart Transcontinental represents to the adult Eddie Willers; its great building gives him a "sense of security"; he thinks it will always stand (6). But its heart—the mind that rules it—has

also rotted away. Its president is James Taggart—and we see what that means as Jim evades the problems on the Rio Norte Line and seeks to avoid the responsibility of decision.

The decision maker, the only reason Taggart Transcontinental still has a heartbeat, is Dagny. But though everyone knows that she's the one who runs things, she is never officially given that recognition or sanction: she is Vice-President in Charge of Operation while Jim is president. Nevertheless, it is Dagny who, by her own admission, saves Taggart Transcontinental from the disasters created by Jim and the Board, such as Mexico's imminent nationalization of Taggart Transcontinental's San Sebastián Line.

But Dagny's job is growing more and more difficult, because good men are now "so strangely hard to find" (17). And yet when she does find one, when she tries to promote to superintendent Owen Kellogg, a young engineer who loves his work, he refuses her offer—for no discernible reason.

What we are actually seeing here is the central conflict of the story: the parasite Jim, trying to exist off the achievements of the mind; Dagny, willing to carry him along in the name of her love for her railroad and for all of existence; and another mind, Kellogg, no longer willing to do penance for that love. And we witness the first effects of the strike on New York City; the strike will have succeeded when the lights of the city go out completely. We even get a glimpse of the fact that Dagny is the strikers' most dangerous enemy; most dangerous in body, of course, because she is the one propping up the looters; but also most dangerous in spirit, because she is the only one who has the capacity to see the strikers for what they are: it is she who spots the young brakeman whistling Halley's Fifth Concerto.

And we glimpse the causes of the conflict. Willers and Dagny are motivated by the right, but do not have the words to name it. Willers does not even know fully what is right—he learns this from Dagny—but like her his motive is to do "whatever is right" and to "always reach for the best within us" (6). The young girl looking down the railroad track, planning one day to run Taggart Transcontinental, knows what is the best within her. But even in adulthood, Dagny is unable fully to name why this is morally right and, especially, to understand the importance of so naming it. This leaves her vulnerable. It is her brother who seizes the realm of morality and so the moral high ground. Jim declares that it is only he that is moved by moral considerations and feelings; she is concerned with the "selfish greed for profit" while Jim is concerned with higher, more important things, like the whole nation and "the human element" (22, 20).

More deeply, we see that Dagny, who is unable fully to put into words even her own approach to existence (Halley's Fifth Concerto gives her an emotional experience of it), cannot fathom her brother's. She does not and has never accepted his view of morality; she senses that there is something not stupid but monstrous at the root of his moral slogans and motivation, but she cannot identify or even believe it. "She wondered why he resented the necessity of dealing with Rearden, and why his resentment had such an odd, evasive quality. . . . If she were insane, thought Dagny, she would conclude that her brother hated to deal with Rearden because Rearden did his job with superlative efficiency; but she could not conclude it, because she thought that such a feeling was not within the humanly possible" (19).

Even more deeply, we glimpse the source of their two opposing approaches to existence: James evades the responsibility of consciousness, Dagny embraces it. When we first meet Jim, he declares to the world outside his door, "Don't bother me, don't bother me, don't bother me" (7). When we first meet Dagny, she has not slept for two days because "she could not permit herself to sleep; she had too many problems to consider and not much time" (14). In their first

meeting in the book, Jim struggles to escape the responsibility of judgment, that is, to judge how to save the Rio Norte Line and whether to use Rearden Metal, while Dagny eagerly accepts it.

Thus all the central questions of the story are raised here, in the first chapter. And the answers, for Dagny as for the reader, are all to be found by answering the question with which the chapter begins—and mysteriously ends: “Who is John Galt?”

Chapter II: The Chain

This chapter’s title obviously derives from the bracelet made from the first pouring of Rearden Metal. At a gathering that includes the Rearden family and Paul Larkin, Hank Rearden’s wife, Lillian, refers to it as “the chain by which he [Hank] holds us all in bondage” (43). Expressing the prevailing moral attitude that the successful seek to oppress the less successful, she asks rhetorically: “What would happen to Henry’s vanity if he didn’t have us to throw alms to? What would become of his strength if he didn’t have weaker people to dominate? What would he do with himself if he didn’t keep us around as dependents?” (43)

But the contradiction is that Lillian’s description does not seem to match either Hank’s attitude and actions—or those of his family.

His family does not cower in his presence; on the contrary, it is they who berate and make demands on him. And Hank has spent the last ten years of his life not in domination of weaker individuals, but in pursuit of a metal superior to steel. Through prodigious thought and effort, he has finally succeeded. He desperately wants to celebrate, but the only salute he receives is a wordless grin of understanding from one of his workers. Indifferent to his family, he does not want to face them tonight, because they won’t understand. “He had never asked anything of them,” he thinks to himself; “it was they who wished to hold him, they who pressed a claim on him—and the claim seemed to have the form of affection, but it was a form which he found harder to endure than any sort of hatred. . . . They professed to love him for some unknown reason and they ignored all the things for which he could wish to be loved” (37).

The chain seems to run in the other direction. As a reflection of his own tremendous life-giving power, Hank is enormously benevolent. He views others as like himself; when he walks home from the mills, he feels “certain that every living being wished him well tonight” (32). Once home, however, he starts to wonder if his family actually does; but he reproaches himself: their insulting comments must be their form of expressing solicitude and affection. He struggles to understand them, but can’t. He certainly does not share their standards and does not feel guilty at their accusations; he smiles when Lillian tries to trap him because he forgot their wedding anniversary. He senses that they are radically unlike him, that they are disappointed that Lillian’s trap didn’t induce guilt and are “wounded by the mere fact of his being” (37). But then he tells himself, don’t “start imagining the insane” (37). His sense of justice does not permit him to “condemn without understanding, and he could not understand” (38). He will not impose his standards on them; even if he loathes their goals, their goals must mean to them what his mills and metal mean to him. They’re simply “bewildered, unhappy children”—and even if he cannot understand what they wish to achieve, he can help them achieve it; he can grant Lillian her anniversary party and Philip his funding for Friends of Global Progress (40).

In fact, Hank does not apply his standards fully even across his business. Larkin warns him not to announce his views too publicly—that they’re Hank’s mills and that his goal is to make steel and money; people regard his standards as antisocial. But Hank doesn’t “give a damn what they think” (39). Yet despite his incredible devotion to his business and its profits, he

cannot bring himself to examine one area of his operations too closely: his man in Washington. Though he knows he needs one, “he could not quite convince himself that it was necessary. An inexplicable kind of distaste, part fastidiousness, part boredom, stopped him whenever he considered it” (40).

The deepest question this chapter raises is: What *are* Hank’s standards—and what would happen if he named and consistently applied them? His is a career of relentless effort to build his business, to earn, to grow, to achieve and to deserve ever greater achievements. Yet when he looks back on his life, something is missing. Standing straight, “as if before a bench of judgment,” he thinks of signs lighted against the darkness: “Rearden Ore—Rearden Coal—Rearden Limestone”; he wishes he could light a sign above them all, “Rearden Life” (32). This is an eloquent expression of his need for full self-esteem: he is efficacious, but does any standard exist under which his actions and entire life would be evaluated as moral? This is the deepest contradiction of the chapter: on the night of his greatest triumph, we see a lonely figure, desperate to celebrate, wondering “why happiness could hurt” (30).

Chapter III: The Top and the Bottom

This chapter opens with a meeting atop a skyscraper and closes with a meeting underground. But the top doesn’t seem like a top, and the bottom doesn’t seem like a bottom.

In a windowless, cellar-like room built on the roof of a skyscraper, Jim, Orren Boyle, Larkin, and Wesley Mouch meet in New York’s most expensive barroom. Using language that is at once conventionally moral and public-spirited sounding, and also vague and almost indecipherable, men of no particular achievement—Boyle’s start in business was through a two-hundred-million-dollar loan from the government and “nobody ever paid any attention” to Mouch—negotiate a deal (45). With their mysterious deal concluded, they discuss their attempt to cash in on the San Sebastián Mines. These do not seem like men fit to run anything. Why are they at the top of the world?

On the other hand, in the underground employees’ cafeteria of Taggart Transcontinental, in a sparkling room with “a sense of light and space,” Willers and a railroad worker—John Galt—discuss real problems (62). In language that is simple and clear, Willers outlines what Dagny, with his help, will do to save the railroad: build the Rio Norte Line, using McNamara as the contractor to lay the rail. These two employees appear competent men, the kind who can get things done. Why are they at the bottom?

The intervening part of the chapter provides clues to the answer. We witness Dagny’s rise through Taggart Transcontinental, her worship of ability, her brushing aside of accusations of conceit and selfishness, her embrace of responsibility as others seek to avoid it. But we also see her relation to Jim, as he rises through Taggart Transcontinental. She cannot understand his motives but she doesn’t think he is “smart enough to harm the railroad too much” (52). Like Hank, she cannot bring herself to examine Jim’s “Washington ability” too closely: “there were many kinds of work which were offensive, yet necessary, like cleaning sewers” (52). And in any event, she would always be there to fix any damage he caused.

Unable to understand Jim, it is she who makes his continued actions possible. His first project as president of Taggart Transcontinental is the San Sebastián Line, a project that bleeds losses for the railroad and undermines the Rio Norte Line. Because of that project, Dagny considers, for the first time, quitting, but shakes her head in angry denial: “she told herself that Taggart Transcontinental would now need her more than ever” (55). Because of Jim’s plan, two

Directors and the Vice-President in Charge of Operation resign. “She never understood why the Board of Directors voted unanimously to make her Vice-President in Charge of Operation” (56). But the answer is contained in the novel’s next sentence. “It was she who finally gave them their San Sebastián Line” (56). After three years of their failures, she completes the line in a year. It is only because of her that Jim can remain at the top of Taggart Transcontinental.

Dagny, we see in this chapter, longs for her radiant kind of world, a world ruled not by ineptitude but by ability—an ability worth matching or beating. But that world remains hidden from her, in the underground of Taggart Transcontinental, because of her own contradiction: she longs for that world but constantly props up the ineptitude that is her brother. Even though Dagny does not realize it yet, her sanction elevates James and his ilk to the top and relegates Galt to the bottom.

Chapter IV: The Immovable Movers

The end of the previous chapter hinted at the supreme importance of motive power—it is the world’s motive power that Galt must stop—and this chapter highlights its importance.

Its central event is the National Alliance of Railroads’ passage of the Anti-dog-eat-dog-Rule, whose effect will be to destroy in nine months the best rail line to Colorado, Dan Conway’s Phoenix-Durango. The rule’s passage was part of the deal negotiated in the cellar barroom.

Dagny urges Conway to fight the injustice, knowing also that the rule will actually make her job in Colorado more difficult. But Conway’s motor has stopped. He who built an obscure railroad into a successful enterprise, no longer wants to fight. Why? Because he’s lost the conviction that he is in the right. The Alliance “had the right to do it,” he tells Dagny; “the world’s in a terrible state right now. . . . Men have to get together. . . . I suppose somebody’s got to be sacrificed. . . . I have no right to complain. The right’s on their side.” Deep down, he senses that the sacrifice of the best railroad to its inferior competition is “damn unjust!” But to fight it “would be wrong. I’m just selfish.” “Oh, damn that rotten tripe!” Dagny tells him. “You know better than that!” Conway answers: “I don’t know what is right any more. . . . I don’t think I care.” Wordlessly, Dagny knows that “Conway would never be a man of action again.” She wonders what has defeated him (77–79).

Conway has relinquished precisely what Dagny won’t. In the name of her own existence, she is dedicated to that which she sees to be right: *she* has always been “the motive power of her own happiness” (65). This conviction is why she is indignant about the Anti-dog-eat-dog-Rule. It is this conviction that makes Dagny (and those like her) an immovable mover: she originates motion in pursuit of the right and will not allow herself to be moved or deflected from her chosen path precisely because it is right.

In complete contrast to Conway and Dagny are Jim and Betty Pope. Theirs is the contradictory spectacle of conscious motion without purpose. “Here’s another day,” Pope declares, “and nothing to do” (70). Jim stumbles into the living room of his apartment, unable to remember why he’s there. He can’t be bothered to figure out why he does the things he does: the two of them slept together because that’s what people do. The only times he has the semblance of purposeful motion is when he can undermine Dagny, and more generally, achievement: he relishes the opportunity to put the skids under Dagny at the Board meeting and gloats over the destruction of Conway.

Dagny will have to learn that Jim's motivation is the opposite of hers: not pursuit of the right, but pursuit of the right's destruction. Dagny senses that Jim's gloating over both Conway and her contains "a secret she had never suspected, and it was crucially important that she learn to understand it. But the thought flashed and vanished" (76). What moves men like Jim?

The question at once seems important and supremely unimportant. In Dagny's kind of world, in the presence of immovable individuals like her and Hank Rearden, the issue seems unreal. "Don't waste time trying to figure him out," Hank tells her. "Let him spit. He's no danger to anyone. People like Jim Taggart just clutter up the world" (85). He and Dagny will "save the country from the consequences of their actions" and then go on to greater achievements; the lunacy of people like Jim is "demented, so it has to defeat itself" (84). Within the minds of Hank and Dagny, there is room for only a single field of concern: concern for their vision of what Rearden Metal will create—a single-minded concern for movement toward that which they know to be right.

And yet, in contradiction to Hank and Dagny's attitude, some seemingly immovable movers are disappearing. Taggart Transcontinental's and the nation's best contractor, McNamara, abruptly quits and vanishes, walking out on "a pile of contracts . . . worth a fortune"; Richard Halley gave up composing at the height of his success; and Francisco d'Anconia, who retains "the smile of a man who is able to see, to know and to create the glory of existence," has become an aimless chaser of women (65, 69). Have they all been defeated, like Conway? (Or have they learned a new conception of the right?) And what will happen to Ellis Wyatt? Like Dagny, he is outraged by the Anti-dog-eat-dog-Rule—he who will be its next sacrificial victim. Wyatt knows he is in the grips of evil, and he is affected by its presence in a way that Hank is not: "You expect to feed off me while you can," Wyatt tells Dagny (thinking she is like Jim), "and to find another carcass to pick dry after you have finished mine. That is the policy of most of mankind today." In the name of what he knows to be right, Wyatt will not fade away like Conway. He will remain a man of action: "I may have to go; but if I go, I'll make sure that I take all the rest of you along with me" (82).

This is not Hank's attitude, but is there a crack in Hank's motive power? Does he know that his course of action is right? "We're a couple of blackguards, aren't we?" he declares to Dagny in a strange tone of dispassionate wonder. But when he looks at his mills, there is "no guilt in his face, no doubt, nothing but the calm of an inviolate self-confidence"—self-confidence, without full self-esteem (88).

Chapter V: The Climax of the d'Anconias

This chapter's name has an obvious derivation: because of his incredible mind, the childhood Francisco held the promise to become "the climax of the d'Anconias" (94). The chapter's full effect is only to deepen the contradiction that is the adult Francisco.

Relentlessly purposeful, dedicated to d'Anconia Copper, admiring of money-making and of productive work as "the only system of morality that's on a gold standard," intensely passionate about Dagny—given what Francisco was, what could cause him to become what he has become? (100) And what *has* he become? Has he given up, like Conway? But then why take, Dagny wonders, "the ugliest way of escape"—an intelligence drowned in throwing parties and chasing women? (116). Moreover, when Dagny meets Francisco in his hotel room to discuss the San Sebastián mines, he does not seem like a man who has given up—and doubt is even cast on whether he chases women.

Clues to the answer are contained in Francisco's childhood. Jim is resentful of Francisco's ability, and Dagny senses that there is something dangerous in men like her brother, but Francisco dismisses her. "Good God, Dagny! Do you expect me to be afraid of an object like James?" (99). Francisco's attitude slowly begins to change, however, in college; he tells Dagny that they are "teaching a lot of drivel nowadays" (99). And from college Jim acquires "a tone of aggressive self-righteousness"; it is "as if he had found a new weapon" (99). Dagny sees the first crack in Francisco's seeming invulnerability shortly after college, when he's working as head of the New York office of d'Anconia Copper. Looking out the window of his office for a long time, his face tight with "an emotion she had never believed possible to him: of bitter, helpless anger," he says to her: "'There's something wrong in the world. There's always been. Something no one has ever named or explained'" (111).

A few years after this episode, Francisco asks her whether she could give up Taggart Transcontinental, pleads with her to help him remain, and warns her that "I will have a reason for the things I'll do. But I can't tell you the reason and you will be right to damn me" (115).

The "things I'll do" begin to emerge with the San Sebastian disaster. Francisco, it appears, has done it on purpose. Jim and his gang wanted to ride on Francisco's coattails, so that knowledge on their part would be unnecessary. Why should Francisco have to exist in some different way? Why are they outraged when he does not prevent the nationalization of the mines, since this act is supposed to be good? Why is the People's State of Mexico accusing *him* of defrauding *them* when his looted mines prove worthless?

When Dagny tells Francisco that he of all people should be fighting the looters, he answers that it is she whom he must fight. What amuses him most is that the San Sebastian disaster has helped destroy the Phoenix-Durango and will, he thinks, destroy Wyatt and then Taggart Transcontinental. She regards this as blasphemy to Sebastian d'Anconia—but he named those mines in tribute to his great ancestor.

Like Dagny, we are left to wonder: Could it be that in some inconceivable way Francisco has actually become what he promised to be: the climax of the d'Anconias?

Chapter VI: The Non-Commercial

What is the relation between the material and the spiritual? The conventional view is that either you are a spiritual person, who is therefore unconcerned with the material world, or you are a materialist, who is therefore preoccupied with money and devoid of any spiritual concern. The events of this chapter seem to contradict both notions.

The guests Lillian invited to celebrate her wedding anniversary are regarded as the spiritualists: the philosopher Dr. Simon Pritchett, the author Balph Eubank, the composer Mort Liddy, the magazine editor Bertram Scudder, the philanthropist Claude Slagenhop. Supposedly, their spiritual concerns are too lofty for the material world. But it is difficult to say just what those spiritual concerns *are*. It is clear what these men are against—Pritchett is against logic and man's delusions of grandeur; Eubank is against free will, plot, happy endings, and stories that portray man as heroic; Liddy is against melody; Scudder is against property rights; and Slagenhop is against all ideas. But what are these men for? Whenever they speak of that, it always concerns controlling those who deal with the material world. Pritchett wants to reduce men to instinct and *force* them to be free, claiming that this isn't a contradiction "in the higher philosophical sense"; Eubank wants to limit "the sale of any book to ten thousand copies";

Scudder and Slagenhop want to seize industrialists' property (134–35). They all support the Equalization of Opportunity Bill, which would break up Hank's business empire.

Hank is the materialist. And he certainly *is* intensely concerned with conquering the material realm by creating new products, like Rearden Metal, and building a business empire. But it doesn't seem accurate to characterize Hank as devoid of spiritual concern. On the contrary, he seems a profoundly spiritual person, moved by the essence of spiritual motivation: the desire to do what is *right*. The reason he sits troubled and paralyzed in his dressing room, unable to finish getting ready for his anniversary party even though he believes he owes Lillian his presence there, is that for the first time in his life the knowledge of what is right is losing its power to move him. "The impossible conflict of feeling reluctance to do that which was right," he thinks to himself, "wasn't it the basic formula of moral corruption?" (131). All the while, he is haunted by his desire for Dagny, a desire he must struggle against and silence—a passionate desire to do what is wrong.

But even if Hank is spiritual, he doesn't identify himself as such: the only terms he has are those of his society. "You don't care for anything but business.' He had heard it all his life, pronounced as a verdict of damnation. . . . He had never held that creed, but he had accepted it as natural that his family should hold it. He took it for granted—wordlessly, in the manner of a feeling absorbed in childhood, left unquestioned and unnamed—that he had dedicated himself, like a martyr of some dark religion, to the service of a faith which was his passionate love, but which made him an outcast among men, whose sympathy he was not to expect." He thinks it his duty to provide Lillian with "some form of existence unrelated to business. But he had never found the capacity to do it or even to experience a sense of guilt" (127–28).

But though he doesn't provide Lillian an existence unrelated to business, he does leave the spiritual realm to Lillian and her friends, thinking his world is unaffected by their prattle. But it isn't. It is they who are pushing the Equalization of Opportunity Bill. The bill is a product of their irrational ideas—which is the reason why Hank cannot even take the bill seriously. "Having dealt with the clean reality of metals, technology, production all his life, he had acquired the conviction that one had to concern oneself with the rational, not the insane" (130).

Even more devastating than this, it is Lillian who has turned his sexual desire into his enemy. Just as she tries to make him feel guilty for his devotion to his mills—at the anniversary party she deliberately makes the bracelet of Rearden Metal look ugly on her arm—so she tries the same in regard to his sexual desire. She has degraded the act of sex and helped him conclude that his desire is materialistic, low, animalistic. But his desire remains, and he now thinks it's his duty to struggle against it. Lillian did not succeed in regard to his work—he does not accept her evaluation of his mills. Why? Because he knows firsthand their actual meaning (though he does not yet have the words to fully name that meaning). But she does succeed in regard to his sexual desire, because he has no firsthand experience of its true spiritual significance, much less the words to name that significance.

It is this split between the spiritual and material that Dagny won't accept. She longs for spiritual celebration of her material achievement and bemoans the fact that her world has nothing to offer, unable to understand why it doesn't. Wandering the streets of New York (in "The Immovable Movers"), Dagny had looked for spiritual fuel—only to be met with the products of Lillian's cocktail-party crowd, like "The Vulture Is Molting." Francisco names what she feels at the party, among men who actually have nothing to celebrate: "what a magnificent waste!" (154). She desires a man worthy of her—unbeknownst to her, she came to the party only because Hank would be there—but finds no one in the world. Her desperate desire to have the bracelet of

Rearden Metal comes from her struggle to preserve her view of the world, where the material and spiritual form an inseparable union. The bracelet is the material symbol of a supreme spiritual accomplishment.

So this chapter leaves us with the question of the actual relation between the spiritual and the material. The spiritual people, the intellectuals, artists and cultural spokesmen, the self-described “non-commercial,” don’t seem spiritual. They don’t seem motivated by the desire to do what is right, and they seem intensely preoccupied with the material realm. What are they after? What is their purpose? What does Lillian want? The supreme materialist, by contrast, seems the most spiritual figure, intensely concerned with doing what is right. But he dismisses the spiritual and moral realms, content to leave them to men who could not even be sweepers in his mills. Why? And why, more widely, is the world bereft of true spiritual grandeur? Why can’t Dagny find her equal?

Chapter VII: The Exploiters and the Exploited

Who are the exploiters and who the exploited?

The view that men like Hank, Dagny, and Wyatt have heard all their lives is that they exploit the Ben Nealys of the world. But isn’t this a contradiction? What does Nealy *have* to exploit? He can’t even do his job properly without the minds of Dagny and Wyatt to guide him. Dagny and Wyatt are not oppressors standing in his way; he is an obstacle standing in their way: Nealy simply quits the job as the denunciations of Rearden Metal escalate. Men like Wyatt do not seek to exploit the Nealys of the world, they seek to be free of such obstacles, which is one reason they have fled to Colorado.

The real exploiters are selfless, “public-spirited” men like Jim, Wesley Mouch, and Dr. Robert Stadler—and the exploited are individuals like Dagny, Hank, and Wyatt. In the name of the public interest, Jim has killed the Phoenix-Durango and now tries to loot the corpse. Jim constantly seeks to position himself so that Dagny sustains Taggart Transcontinental while he remains on top, doing nothing. After the crash of Taggart Transcontinental’s stock (a consequence of Jim killing the Phoenix-Durango), it is Dagny who must build the Rio Norte Line and save Taggart Transcontinental, risking her career, while he remains unaffected. “Nothing will change,” Dagny tells him, “except the kind of show you will put on for your friends . . . and the fact that it will be a little harder for me” (194). Mouch, similarly, has been on Rearden’s payroll, using it to advance up the ladder of power in Washington; Mouch then helps pass the Equalization of Opportunity Bill. And through the State Science Institute, Stadler forces all “the greedy ruffians who run our industries” to pay for his theoretical research. And to maintain the State Science Institute’s prestige, he also tries to keep Rearden Metal off the market. (How will the “greedy ruffian” Hank then fund Stadler’s research? This is one of the contradictions Stadler refuses to face.) More widely, the looters in Washington and New York are exploiting the last bastion of productivity, Colorado, a fact Dagny senses in the cab ride with Jim, seeing through the cab’s window all the products flowing into the city from the industries of Colorado.

Why do the exploited permit their exploitation? They don’t—when they can grasp the moral issue and the evil involved. Dagny stops the cab and leaps out when she learns that she is supposed to debate Bertram Scudder on whether Rearden Metal is a lethal product of greed. “You goddamn fool,” she declares to Jim, “do you think I consider the question debatable?” (175). Hank refuses the State Science Institute’s demand that he keep Rearden Metal off the

market (or sell it to them, so that they can use it but keep it off the market). “Would you tell me,” Dr. Potter asks him, “just between us, it’s only my personal curiosity—why are you doing this?” Hank answers: “I’ll tell you. You won’t understand. You see, it’s because Rearden Metal is *good*” (182). Hank also refuses his mother’s demand to give a job to his brother Philip. He realizes that if he gave a job to Philip, he would be betraying his mills. “What are they, your mills—a holy temple of some kind?” his mother asks. ““Why . . . yes,’ he said softly, astonished at the thought.” “Don’t you ever think of people,” his mother responds, “and of your moral duties?” “I don’t know what it is that you choose to call morality,” Hank answers. “No, I don’t think of people—except that if I gave a job to Philip, I wouldn’t be able to face any competent man who needed work and deserved it” (209).

But more often, they cannot understand the nature of the evil they face. Dagny is cautious around both Jim and Stadler, but cannot grasp their level of moral corruption. And because of her passionate love for her railroad, she will pay any price for it. She will leave Taggart Transcontinental and her position of Vice-President, perhaps never to return, in order to build the John Galt Line; she will agree to Jim’s terms; and she will go see Stadler about the State Science Institute’s statement on Rearden Metal. She accepts that Jim and the others will erect obstacles in front of her, but hopes they’ll leave her and Hank alone long enough to complete the John Galt Line; indeed, the one condition she imposes on Jim is: “keep your Washington boys off” (197).

Hank too cannot yet understand them: he cannot understand what motivates them and he doesn’t want to descend into their filth to find out. When his mother tells him her conception of morality is that “virtue is the giving of the underserved” Hank replies: “Mother, you don’t know what you’re saying. I’m not able ever to despise you enough to believe that you mean it” (209). When the Equalization of Opportunity Bill passes, Hank thinks to himself: “There is an obscenity of evil which contaminates the observer. There is a limit to what it is proper for a man to see. He must not think of this, or look within, or try to learn the nature of its roots” (215). And like Dagny, Hank too will pay any price for the love of his mills. Indeed, he barely has time to notice the price. The Equalization of Opportunity Bill and its evil fade from his mind as he thinks of a new type of bridge design, one combining a truss and an arch.

We see here again the question of the relation between the spiritual and the material. Dagny and Hank apply the right spiritual standard to the material realm when they see the issue—she refuses to appear on Scudder’s radio program and Hank refuses to hire Philip. But Dagny and Hank cannot understand the corruption of the mystics who split the spiritual from the material nor understand what these people are after in the material world. This leaves Dagny and Hank vulnerable to exploitation. For what the mystics seek is to be freed from the need to consider such issues as the true, the good, the earned, and the deserved when it comes to the “low,” “grubby” material world. Stadler wants to pursue his theoretical physics, unconcerned with whether his material means of doing so are deserved. Jim wants to be the President of Taggart Transcontinental, unconcerned with the need to earn his position. Hank’s mother wants Hank to give Philip a job he doesn’t deserve and to make it look like Philip is doing *Hank* a favor. What we see here is that the spiritual-material split is a way to escape justice—or better, to invert it, to insist that spiritual grandeur comes from inverting the requirements of the material world. Virtue, according to Hank’s mother, is the giving of the undeserved.

And so when Dagny goes to see Stadler to tell him that there is only one reason he must speak out in defense of Rearden Metal, “you must say it, because it is true”—she is actually sanctioning his evil and his exploitation of individuals like her (189). She is acting as if he is, like her, dedicated to the truth as an absolute.

Dagny herself doesn't accept a split between the spiritual and the material, but she also doesn't have the words to identify fully their union, and her vision of their actual relation is eroding. When the bum in the diner laments that there's "no spirit involved in manufacturing or sex" and that morality is "judgment to distinguish right and wrong, vision to see the truth, courage to act upon it, dedication to that which is good, integrity to stand by the good at any price. But where does one find it?"—the joke, of course, is on him (177). He could find it if he looked straight at the woman sitting in front of him. But Dagny's vision of the ideal is also slipping: she has stopped expecting to find people dedicated to the true and the good and has stopped expecting to find spiritual grandeur and celebration in the world. She doesn't even realize that she's attracted to Hank for precisely this need and desire.

We're left to wonder: Is a person's choice then either to become an exploiter of others, or to be exploited by an evil he cannot understand and thereby slowly lose his vision of the good? We do get glimpses of another possibility: men who are resigning and vanishing, men who refuse to be exploited but who do not themselves become exploiters. Is Francisco one of them? Dagny places Francisco on the side of the looters, but is he? This much we know: he will not help Dagny build the John Galt Line—and he tells her that John Galt will come to claim it.

Chapter VIII: The John Galt Line

In contrast to the previous two chapters, which dealt with the split between the spiritual and the material, this chapter showcases their unity. The longing and loneliness that Dagny feels, alone in her office of the John Galt Line, is the despair that her spiritual values will not be brought into material form, that the man at the end of the rails, and the love she would feel for him and he for her, will remain only "her own thought of what life could be like" (220). The spiritual should be made real. This is the meaning of the achievement that is the John Galt Line.

"It was a strange foreshortening between sight and touch," Dagny thinks to herself as she sits in the fireman's chair on the first run of the John Galt Line, "between wish and fulfillment, between—the words clicked sharply in her mind after a startled stop—between spirit and body. First, the vision—then the physical shape to express it. First, the thought—then the purposeful motion down the straight line of a single track to a chosen goal. Could one have any meaning without the other? Wasn't it evil to wish without moving—or to move without aim? Whose malevolence was it that crept through the world, struggling to break the two apart and set them against each other?" (240–41). Looking through the cab, she wonders:

Who made it possible for four dials and three levers in front of Pat Logan to hold the incredible power of the sixteen motors behind them and deliver it to the effortless control of one man's hand? These things and the capacity from which they came—was this the pursuit men regarded as evil? Was this what they called an ignoble concern with the physical world? Was this the state of being enslaved by matter? Was this the surrender of man's spirit to his body? She shook her head, as if she wished she could toss the subject out of the window and let it get shattered somewhere along the track. She looked at the sun on the summer fields. She did not have to think, because these questions were only details of a truth she knew and had always known. (241)

This unity of spirit and matter, of a disciplined intelligence devoted to its life on earth, is the meaning of the John Galt Line. And this is what Dagny and Hank celebrate when they sleep together. She knows it, he doesn't.

If we turn from Dagny and Hank's creation of the John Galt Line to the world's reaction, we see that their achievement is granted no moral recognition or spiritual significance. Eddie Willers senses the danger of this. "Why does she have to hide?" he asks the Taggart Transcontinental worker. "Why are they torturing her in return for saving their lives? . . . There's something about it all that I can't define, and it's something evil. That's why I'm afraid" (218). The presence of this evil is also the source of Wyatt's rebellious anger, when he thinks that the John Galt Line will soon be destroyed. "To the world as it seems to be right now!" he shouts, and then throws the champagne glass across the room (250).

Why is the achievement that is the John Galt Line in such danger? The danger comes from divorcing the material from the spiritual—from Dagny and Hank creating the John Galt Line but not demanding the spiritual and moral recognition that is their due.

By contrast, it is precisely this divorce of matter from spirit that Galt won't permit himself. He is in love with Dagny and wants to go to her, when he sees her alone, slumped across the desk of her office, thinking of him (though she doesn't know it). Dagny is not ready to strike, and his action of entering her office would betray his vision of what he knows the world can be and in the name of which he is on strike.

Chapter IX: The Sacred and the Profane

If anything is regarded as sacred by the world, it is the moral sentiments Jim voices. He declares that the pursuit of profit is not a noble motive but working for others is, that building a rail line for prosperous industrialists when poor people need transportation is wrong, that inventing a new metal when numerous nations still go without iron is evil, that pride is the worst sin and selflessness the greatest virtue, that there are higher things in life than material products like rails and bridges, and that these higher spiritual things cannot be identified or measured. Jim's relationship with Cherryl too would be regarded as noble, an act of charity toward her.

Yet Jim's actual sentiments and actions seem to contradict this evaluation: far from being sacred, they seem profane. His moral slogans serve as weapons to discredit Dagny and Hank and to hold his own nonachievement as superior to their achievements. With the success of the John Galt Line, however, his self-deception is more difficult to maintain; he finds himself wishing they had failed, yet frightened by what this would reveal about himself if he faced it. Cherryl is the one person he wants to see after the success of the John Galt Line, because her misdirected hero worship at once props himself up in his own eyes—it is as though he were actually good—and also allows him to recapture a sense of superiority—by being able to successfully defraud her. Their encounter serves as "his revenge upon every person who had stood cheering along the three-hundred-mile track of the John Galt Line" (267).

And what in fact seems sacred, Dagny and Hank's desire for each other, Hank, echoing the world's standards, damns as profane. Hank has accepted one aspect of the spirit-matter split. As Jim denounces production as materialistic, so Hank denounces sex as animalistic; as Jim declares suffering the proof of virtue, so Hank declares pleasure the proof of vice. Yet his evaluation of their affair contradicts his actual experience: he is finding for the first time joy and serenity in his personal life. He's starting to glimpse that his desire for Dagny and hers for him

comes from the core of their beings: he asks Dagny to wear the bracelet made from the first pouring of Rearden Metal, the symbol of his productive ability, the symbol of his virtue.

More widely, the spirit-matter dichotomy is accepted by the world, and so what it should regard as sacred, it treats as insignificant or profane. Hank attends a banquet held in his honor because he thinks that his opponents have at last learned to appreciate the value of Rearden Metal—and for that, he would forgive anyone anything. But what he learns about them is that they don't value anything, that they are merely going through motions copied from a better age. Both the John Galt Line and the productive explosion in Colorado should be regarded with reverence; Hank thinks it's now "clear track ahead" and that after giving the world the demonstration he and Dagny gave it with the first run of the John Galt Line, the Equalization of Opportunity Bill will be scrapped (277). But that's not the popular attitude, as expressed by Mr. Mowen.

Mowen thinks he has a right to live as he has always lived, his routine undisturbed. He does not look with reverence at Hank's and Dagny's or Colorado's achievements. He seeks protection from them. There ought to be a law, he says, against businesses moving to Colorado. He should be protected from the dog-eat-dog competition of the Stockton Foundry—and Taggart Transcontinental should face more competition in Colorado. Hank shouldn't be able to manufacture so much Rearden Metal that he disrupts other people's markets—but Mowen should be able to get as much Rearden Metal as he wants. Wyatt's output should be capped to "leave the little people a chance"—but something ought to be done about the shortage of oil in the city (272). Mowen wants a material existence that requires no thought or logical consistency—and he expects Washington, somehow, to make this possible. "Steps are being taken," he tells Kellogg. "Constructive steps. The Legislature has passed a Bill giving wider powers to the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources" (273).

The nation should value industry (along with the ambition and greed that creates it), but as Dagny and Hank discover on their vacation, industry is disappearing from vast stretches of America. This fact is crystallized by the desecration of the motor. It was an invention that would have revolutionized the world, abandoned in a defunct factory. And even when the factory itself was looted, its most valuable treasure passed unnoticed, probably stripped for parts so that someone's diapers could hang "on a clothesline made of the motor's missing wires" (291).

In such a world, what can be the fate of the John Galt Line and Colorado?

Chapter X: Wyatt's Torch

In one of its meanings, a "torch" refers to something that serves to illuminate, enlighten, or guide. Dagny and Hank are on two quests for which they need illumination and guidance: to find the inventor of the motor and to save Colorado.

The superlative achievement that is the motor has been abandoned, its promise unfulfilled and its inventor and his fate, unknown. How is this possible? Who invented it? What has happened to him? Even more desperately, the looters are threatening to destroy Colorado. But how can Hank and Dagny stop the looters? Hank knows of "no weapons but to pay for what he wanted, to give value for value, to ask nothing of nature without trading his effort in return, to ask nothing of men without trading the product of his effort. What were the weapons . . . if values were not a weapon any longer?" (303). Similarly, Dagny can see "no way of fighting, no rules of battle, no weapons" (298). What action could she take "against the men of undefined

thought, of unnamed motives, of unstated purposes, of unspecified morality. . . . What were the weapons . . . in a realm where reason was not a weapon any longer?" (300).

Dagny senses that these two quests are linked, because the mind that could invent the motor would know how to fight the looters.

Wyatt's burning oil fields—and that which caused him to light them—do illuminate both quests, but Hank and Dagny must learn to see this for themselves. They must learn that Wyatt's act was not an act of rebellious despair but in fact the only way for Wyatt to fight the looters. They must learn to view their own achievements with full pride and to grasp that to fight evil, there cannot be even one act of cooperation, material or spiritual, with it.

Hank in particular is disarmed by guilt. In accepting an aspect of the spiritual-material dichotomy, he has damned as sin his joyous affair with Dagny. His sense of guilt now undercuts the righteousness he needs to fight the looters. "He did not know—as he sat slumped at his desk, thinking of the honesty he could claim no longer, of the sense of justice he had lost—that it was his rigid honesty and ruthless sense of justice that were now knocking his only weapon out of his hands. He would fight the looters, but the wrath and fire were gone" (303).

But Hank must also grasp the fundamental motive of his enemies. He now senses that there is something monstrous about his family; but at this point he still cannot believe that they mean what they're saying. Yet he is beginning to see that the issue is crucially important. "Lillian," he asks her, no longer on the defensive in their conversation, "what purpose do you live for?" When she answers that perhaps spiritual, enlightened people don't attempt to do anything, and that they certainly don't spend their time on the grimy job of manufacturing plumbing pipes, Hank answers: "I know that you feel contempt for the plumbing pipes. You've made that clear long ago. Your contempt means nothing to me. Why keep repeating it?" He wondered why this hit her; he did not know in what manner, but he knew that it did. He wondered why he felt with absolute certainty that *that* had been the right thing to say" (308).

Dagny too is catching glimpses of the nature of the evil she faces. In the course of searching for the inventor of the motor, she comes across many variations of evil: Mayor Bascom, Eugene Lawson, Lee Hunsacker, the Starnes heirs. When Ivy Starnes tells her of the noble, spiritual plan they imposed at the Twentieth Century Motor Company—only to see it defeated by the selfish, base, materialistic nature of men—"Dagny heard a cold, implacable voice saying somewhere within her: Remember it—remember it well—it is not often that one can see pure evil—look at it—remember—and some day you'll find the words to name its essence" (323). This *is* the essence she must grasp. She must grasp that Eric Starnes—"the man who gives his life for malice"—is the essence of evil (321). She must identify what she has now but sensed about Jim: that self-interest is not his motive.

If she could identify their motive, she would see that Wyatt's fate—"Ellis Wyatt being choked, with his own bright energy turned against him as the noose"—*must* be the fate of all the life-bringers in the looters' system (335). And then she would see that the actions of Midas Mulligan, of Judge Narangansett, of William Hastings, of the engineers at the Twentieth Century Motor Company, and of Ellis Wyatt are the only way to fight the looters—that in saving Jim's neck, as she admits she has done, she is only tightening the noose around hers.

Her quest would then be over, for she will have solved the secret Galt solved and that involves, in Hugh Akston's words, "something greater—much greater—than the invention of a motor run by atmospheric electricity" (331).

PART II: EITHER-OR

Part I focused on achievement: the creation of a rail line made of a new metal superior to steel, in order to provide service to the booming state of Colorado. It dealt with the obstacles Dagny and Hank faced in building the John Galt Line—both the men of ability disappearing and the looters like Jim, Mouch, Boyle, and Stadler attacking Rearden Metal, destroying the Phoenix-Durango and passing the Equalization of Opportunity Bill. It showed how Dagny and Hank succeeded nevertheless—and then how easily their achievement was destroyed by the looters’ directives.

Part II contains no comparable act of achievement. Colorado rapidly disintegrates and Dagny and Hank are left trying to tread water, hoping that they can somehow prevent the whole country from going under. The only thing that gives meaning to the future for Hank and Dagny, a future where achievement would once again be possible, is the quest to find the inventor of the motor and learn why his invention was left abandoned in a factory.

They must learn that it is either-or. Either the world is such that an inventor of a new power source is admired, or it is a world where achievement disappears. Either it is a world where the productive state of Colorado is protected and not looted, or it is a world that descends into a thousand Starnesvilles. There is no stable middle ground, only a downward spiral. The appearance of a firm middle ground came only from the fact that there always seemed to be another victim to loot. But as more and more industrialists vanish, from Colorado and elsewhere, new victims are more difficult to find.

In a last stab to find a stable middle ground, the looters attempt to freeze the nation and the economy by issuing Directive 10-289. Under the directive, they know, there will be no new achievement, but also, they hope, no further decay because everyone will be tied to their jobs, performing the same routine over and over. But by outlawing achievement and its source, the thinking mind, the looters simply hasten the nation’s disintegration.

The Taggart tunnel disaster illustrates how the nation descends from the shining productivity that was Colorado to the fate of Starnesville. As a result of Directive 10-289, there are few thinking men left on Taggart Transcontinental. They’ve been replaced by individuals who seek to exist without judgment, without having to decide whether something is either A or non-A. In reality, either it is safe to send a coal-burning engine into the tunnel or it is not safe. But no one at Taggart Transcontinental will officially declare that it is safe or not safe. They seek to exist in some indefinite, nebulous middle. The passengers too seek to exist in the middle. They accept and echo all the ideas and slogans of the looters, yet still expect there to be functioning trains and a functioning industrial civilization. They discover otherwise; their last sight on earth is Wyatt’s torch.

Looking at it another way, what destroyed the Twentieth Century Motor Company and led to Starnesville is precisely what the whole nation is now trying to implement: the special tax imposed on Colorado was morally justified by noting that Colorado was “the state best able to assist the needier states to bear the brunt of the national emergency” (part I, 334). The results of this morality have to be the same.

This is what the Twentieth Century Motor Company’s young engineer grasps. He realizes that it is either-or. Either you are on the side of the mind and achievement or you are on the side of the world’s corrupt moral ideal—and only the sanction of the victims has obscured this fact. When he hears the Starnes’ plan, John Galt promises to stop the motor of the world.

What he has learned is what Hank and Dagny must discover. Both are caught in the middle. Hank senses the freedom that would come from quitting—he laughs at Wyatt’s act of

destruction and later at the crash of d'Anconia Copper's stock, and he wants to laugh when Ragnar tells him no one will be permitted to manufacture Rearden Metal. But he stops himself because he cannot desert his mills—nor blame Ragnar for the course of action Ragnar has chosen.

Hank is beginning to discover with Francisco's help, however, that he is in the middle: he hasn't been fighting the looters, he's been propping them up through his moral sanction. But Hank thinks he can withdraw his sanction, as he does at his trial, and still remain in the world fighting the looters.

Dagny does quit after Directive 10-289 is passed, but she doesn't know how to go on after that. She feels caught in a world without shape or identity. "It seems monstrously wrong to surrender the world to the looters," she says, "and monstrously wrong to live under their rule. I can neither give up nor go back. I can neither exist without work nor work as a serf" (618). But she rushes back to the world after the tunnel disaster, unable to abandon her love to its complete destruction.

Both Hank and Dagny must learn that their battle is either-or: that they are either on the side of the strikers or on the side of the looters, either on the side of the mind or on the side of the mindless.

Chapter I: The Man Who Belonged on Earth

The title of this chapter refers to Hank—and to Stadler. Both men have a spirit-matter split. Hank is a man who belongs on earth, or more exactly, Dagny thinks to herself, "a man to whom the earth belongs"; but he is only beginning to discover this fact (370). Stadler, by contrast, is the man to whom the earth could have belonged, but he's renounced it.

When Hank walks to Dagny's apartment from the conference with the doomed copper producers, he is filled with loathing for the world. "If what he saw around him was the world in which he lived, then he did not want to touch any part of it, he did not want to fight it, he was an outsider with nothing at stake and no concern for remaining alive much longer" (374). But Hank does not succumb to the loathing; he sees and chooses to hold on to the possibility of another mode of existence, of men whose purpose is to rise and to build, to create metals and motors; "so long as he knew that there existed one man with the bright courage of a new thought, could he give up the world to those others? . . . the men who invented motors did exist, he would never doubt their reality, it was his vision of them that had made the contrast unbearable, so that even the loathing was a tribute of his loyalty to them and to the world which was theirs and his" (377).

Hank is a this-worldly idealist: he wants to make the ideal, real. This has always been his motivation in business, to build in the image of his vision of what could be—to erect mills and produce steel and invent a metal superior to steel. He's now *beginning* to see that this union of the spiritual and the material should pervade his whole life—that he should not leave his capacity to love Dagny unexpressed, confined to the hopeless longings of paintings and museums—that the pleasure of luxuries are real when infused with spiritual significance, as they are between him and Dagny—that his desire for her and hers for him are expressions and celebrations of their desire to live—"that that which he had called her depravity" in Wyatt's house "was her highest virtue—this capacity of hers to feel the joy of being, as he felt it" (378).

As a this-worldly idealist, Hank won't surrender the world to evil. He would not, for instance, sell Rearden Metal to the State Science Institute without knowing what Project X is. And he is now beginning to see how to fight his enemies. They depend on some kind of sanction

from their victims—the traffic cop from the State Science Institute needed Rearden to pretend that the transaction would be a friendly sale, just as Stadler needed Dagny to pretend that his was still a mind devoted to intelligence and truth, not to their destruction.

But can you remain in the looters' world without sanctioning their evil? Hank senses the answer, when he laughs in triumph and deliverance at Wyatt's burning oil fields, but he then pulls back, "now condemned to constant vigilance against himself" (363). He wants to remain in the world, with his mills and his metal, and still fight the looters. He'll discover it's either-or.

Stadler too feels loathing for the world as it is, but for him the loathing has become a constant emotion. Why? Because rather than fighting for his kind of world and for any man with the courage of a new thought, as Hank resolves to do, Stadler declares the fight futile—what can you do when you have to deal with people? Instead of fighting, he chooses to make terms with evil by divorcing spirit from matter. He seeks as a refuge a pure world of theory and intellect. He renounces the material world as low and unworthy—a realm in which intelligence is unneeded. The only possible function of its inhabitants is to serve him; he commands—he needs a research laboratory or more heating at the Institute—and they should obey. He thereby helps deliver the world to the mindless and so, eventually, to the brute.

And this is precisely what we begin to see springing up everywhere: rule by the non-mind, from the State Science Institute "successfully" reclaiming Wyatt's oil fields without producing a drop of oil—to Jim claiming that Taggart Transcontinental is at its most profitable because unearned money is flowing in from Washington—to the Wet Nurse becoming the Deputy Director of Distribution for Rearden Metal. It is this fact that Floyd Ferris's book, *Why Do You Think You Think?* drives home to Stadler and which he must evade: Stadler has placed his name and intellect in the service of the anti-mind. Stadler desperately longs for men of intelligence—while promoting the idea that men are irrational and that intelligence is unnecessary to live in the world. He wants above all to see Galt, but has to hope Galt is dead, because Galt's is the voice that would blast away Stadler's evasions and reveal Stadler's actual motivation.

For Stadler too it is either-or: either he acknowledges the inescapable fact that life on earth demands intelligence, and like Hank resolves to fight for these men instead of making them his victims—or he holds that the material world does not demand intelligence. But then what do its keepers need Stadler for? This is his great fear: rather than the Floyd Ferrises of the world—the valets of science—ministering to him, they won't need him any longer.

Chapter II: The Aristocracy of Pull

As Francisco remarks, the aristocracy of pull has replaced the aristocracy of money. The people now running the country, we see in this chapter, trade not in money but in men. They therefore must hold something over the men whom they trade.

It is a precarious form of existence: even within the world of the looters, none can be certain his blackmails will work. Jim had Mouch in his pocket because of written evidence documenting how Mouch double-crossed Rearden. But Mouch is getting to be so influential in Washington that even such an ugly scandal would not derail him; Jim's hold on Mouch is slipping: Mouch doesn't even bother to show up for Jim's wedding.

But as these men jockey for the power to loot, their schemes require that there still exist men who make money. They believe there will always be producers continuing to produce, whom they can exploit. The power-seekers at Jim's wedding are all counting on Francisco to

make d'Anconia Copper wildly profitable. They are, in Francisco's words, "the men of the double standard . . . the men who are the hitchhikers of virtue." But what if Francisco removes the pillar holding them up, by deliberately choosing not to produce? With the news of d'Anconia Copper's impending crash, we see the looters for what they are: "These men had become a pile of rubble, clattering in the wind of panic, the rubble left of a structure when its key pillar has been cut" (422).

But three pillars remain in the room, looking at one another: Francisco, Dagny, and Hank. And the looters still have a hold on the last two.

The looters count on their victim accepting their standards without him understanding those standards or being fully aware that he is sanctioning a whole different code. We see this happen with Hank. He attends Jim's wedding because he thinks he is guilty and Lillian is in the right to demand that he perform his duties as a husband. But his evaluation of his guilt and her right actually comes from her standards, not his own. And his very presence at the wedding implies that they are not looters. "In your code but not in theirs," Francisco tells him, "accepting a man's hospitality is a token of good will, a declaration that you and your host stand on terms of a civilized relationship. Don't give them that kind of sanction" (416). But Rearden can't yet understand what Lillian and the others are after and so what it is he's sanctioning.

We see the same form of error with Cherryl. She can't understand much of what Jim confesses to her, and the parts she thinks she understands, she has whitewashed by reinterpreting according to her standards. So for instance she thinks that Jim's fellow looters hate him because they envy his achievement and that when Jim flaunts that she's only a shop girl, it's "the gesture of a courageous man defying their opinion" (391). Like Rearden, she is suspicious and uneasy at times, but she gives Jim the benefit of every doubt. She can't fathom his motivation: "there are people who'll try to hurt you through the good they see in you," the sob sister tells her, "knowing that it's good, needing it and punishing you for it. Don't let it break you when you discover that" (392).

But the pull the looters have on a man of virtue is actually more precarious than the blackmails they have on each other. It will disappear if their victim identifies his own standards and those of his oppressors. And Hank is beginning to glimpse this fact: at the party he suddenly wonders why he should have to live by standards other than his own—why doesn't he just seize Dagny, as he so desperately wants to? He also momentarily applies his own standards to Lillian by thinking that a contract is not valid if "no valuable consideration had been given by one party to the other" (398). He senses that all the questions of his life would be answered if he discovered the connection between having to hide his deal with Danagger and his affair with Dagny. And he laughs at Francisco's deliberate act of destruction.

For the looters' world to collapse requires only that one of its last pillars, Hank, grasp that the answer to Francisco's question is that he, Hank, is the guiltiest man in the room. As Francisco says at the end of his speech about the meaning of money, "When money ceases to be the tool by which men deal with one another, then men become the tools of men. Blood, whips and guns—or dollars. Take your choice—there is no other—and your time is running out" (415). Time is running out—the world is descending into savagery—because Galt has been systematically removing the pillars like Hank, the pillars on which the whole (seemingly civilized) aristocracy of pull depends. The greatest symbol of Jim's power, much greater than if Mouch had attended his wedding, is Lillian's gift to him: Hank's attendance. "Your guests are quite impressed," Lillian tells Jim. "Most of them are thinking: 'If he has to seek terms with Jim Taggart, we'd better toe the line.' And a few are thinking: 'If he's afraid, we'll get away with

much more.' This is as you want it, of course" (398). But Hank can end Jim's power simply by walking away.

Chapter III: White Blackmail

The few remaining pillars continue to fall—Ken Danagger quits, refusing (we learn in a later chapter) to be paid with torture for his virtues. It is this form of torture, this white blackmail, that Hank is starting to understand.

Lillian is worried, and not without reason, that Hank will do what Francisco did to d'Anconia Copper. The reason she is worried is that although Hank remains captive to alien standards in his personal life, he is beginning to see the importance of explicitly proclaiming his standards in business. This becomes evident when Ferris tries to blackmail Hank into voluntarily selling Rearden Metal to the State Science Institute for Project X. Ferris threatens to expose the business deal Hank made with Danagger, and Hank wonders why Ferris seems pleased that one of their laws has been broken. "Well," Ferris answers him, "what do you think there they're for?" Hank now sees the flaw in their racket. They don't care that their laws have been broken—they want them to be broken—but they rely on their victim caring about upholding the law and experiencing guilt when he violates it. What happens if the victim refuses to feel guilty for violating a law he rejects? You cannot blackmail a person by threatening to publicly expose that which he himself regards *and* will openly proclaim as good. This is what the looters will find out at Hank's trial.

But Hank cannot yet see that the same applies to his affair with Dagny, because he still does not fully understand the virtue involved in their affair or the vice involved in his marriage. Although he tells Dagny he thinks he was lying to himself in Wyatt's house, he still cannot accept that Dagny wants to sleep with him (or with anyone) and believes that it's right that he suffer for betraying Lillian. (In actual fact, his suffering comes from his betrayal of Dagny by remaining with Lillian.) When Lillian discovers he's having an affair, Hank thinks it's right that Lillian now dictate the terms of their relationship; he wants a divorce, but grants that the decision is hers. When she refuses him a divorce, he thinks the cause is her love for him. Yet her punishment for Hank is that he will have "to come home and face the only person who knows you for what you really are, who knows the actual value of your word, of your honor, of your integrity, of your vaunted self-esteem" (431). Hank senses that there is some flaw in her system of punishment, but cannot yet name it.

But Francisco is helping him name it. He tells Hank that the issues Hank is grappling with are much wider than business. "What I wonder about, Mr. Rearden, is why you live by one code of principles when you deal with nature and by another when you deal with men?" (451). Francisco tells him he's facing a *moral* conflict. "You who won't allow one per cent of impurity into an alloy of metal—what have you allowed into your moral code? . . . You bowed to their code and never upheld your own. . . . Their moral code is their weapon. Ask yourself how deeply and in how many terrible ways you have accepted it. . . . You have been paying blackmail, not for your vices, but for your virtues. . . . Yours was the code of life. What, then, is theirs?" (454–55). In this conflict, Francisco is indicating to Hank, the choice is either-or: either Hank applies his principles everywhere or he ends up applying them nowhere.

But if Hank is beginning to see the injustice he's been subjected to, how, Francisco wonders, can he carry such an inhuman burden? Because Hank does not see himself like Atlas—"blood running down his chest, his knees buckling, his arms trembling but still trying to hold the

world aloft with the last of his strength” (455). As Hank sees himself, he is a pillar that will not break. Hank’s enormous vitality, Francisco learns when Hank saves his life during the accident in the mills, masks the heavy burden Hank carries. This metaphysical issue is the looters’ deepest hold on Hank, their deepest form of white blackmail. “Don’t you see?” Hank tells Francisco. “We’re able to act. They’re not. So it’s we who’ll win in the long run, no matter what they do to us” (460).

Chapter IV: The Sanction of the Victim

In this chapter Hank frees himself from the guilt his family has spent its energies trying to induce in him. He sees that Lillian’s attempt to punish him rested on his virtues—another form of white blackmail. Accusations of his moral depravity would affect him only if he had the virtue to take his own moral character seriously. He would worry about causing Lillian pain only if he were benevolent enough to feel concern for her. “His virtues, all the virtues she needed to achieve his punishment, came from another code and lived by another standard.” But what then is the nature of *her* code? “A code—he thought—which would destroy only those who tried to observe it; a punishment, from which only the honest would suffer, while the dishonest would escape unhurt. Could one conceive of an infamy lower than to equate virtue with pain?” (465).

But does his family understand the nature of the code they espouse?

Hank senses that they do—he notes that Philip seems to enjoy that Hank is being denounced by all the newspapers and that Lillian seems to enjoy her status as the betrayed wife who has the right to seek vengeance on him. He also notes the radical difference between their reactions and that of the Wet Nurse, who has come to worship Hank and the mills. But Hank cannot believe anyone is capable of the level of evil he is sensing in his family. Yet why don’t they even try to defend their code, now that he openly rejects it and asserts his own standards—as he does when he tells Philip that the next time Philip utters his depraved moral views, Hank will toss him out of the house? Hank senses that the key here too is the sanction of the victim—that he has somehow made their whole code possible—but he does not yet understand in what precise way.

But he understands how the principle pertains to his trial, and in proudly proclaiming his own standards in business and rejecting theirs, he gets off. The looters need his help to make his trial look like a tribunal of justice, and he refuses to cooperate. They scurry away, unsure of how to proceed. “But if this is what has beaten us, he thought, the guilt is ours” (483). The real sentence the trial imposes on him is to discover why men are so willing to renounce the good within them as sin.

Despite the trial’s outcome, only Dagny and Willers gain inspiration from it; Hank’s fellow businessmen do not join his stand; instead, they seek a middle ground. Like Francisco, Hank feels contempt for them as they struggle to evade that the issue is either-or. “Why go to extremes?”—one businessman tells Hank. “There’s always a middle ground.” Hank answers: “A middle ground between you and your murderers?” (484).

But Francisco suggests to Hank that he too is caught in the middle: Hank is not consistently practicing the principle he declared at his trial. And notice that Hank in fact lost the trial and is still trying to function under the looters’ unjust and non-objective laws. In the course of his conversation with Francisco, Hank learns of a whole area that he had not yet considered or understood, namely the two opposing codes’ evaluation of sex; this knowledge will eventually help him understand the true scope of the sanction of the victim.

And at the end of their conversation, Hank witnesses—though he doesn't know it—a man who is *not* caught in the middle, a man who fully understands the principle of the sanction of the victim. Francisco refuses to prop up and sanction the looters' system by allowing the three ships carrying d'Anconia copper to reach New York, even though he knows it will cost him Hank's friendship.

Chapter V: Account Overdrawn

“You're the account I own!” Lillian shouts at Hank in this chapter. But the reality she senses and is trying to escape is that she no longer does. She has controlled Hank by draining his self-esteem, but she knows that his affair with Dagny, which Lillian has just discovered, has revived it. His own pleasure is now sacred to him; he would have the joy he gets from his relationship with Dagny even if it took Lillian's life. Hank still feels guilt, but not because of anything he has done to Lillian; emotionally, he is now free of concern for her. His guilt comes from what he said to Dagny in Wyatt's house and for its root within him, “the obscenity of letting impotence hold itself as virtue and damn the power of living as a sin” (530).

But though these are Hank's emotions, he is not actually free of Lillian. He still thinks she is motivated, in some twisted way, by love for him and that out of pity for her unrequited love he should take *her* standards into account. “By every standard of mine, to maintain our marriage will be a vicious fraud. But my standards are not yours. I do not understand yours, I never have, but I will accept them. If this is the manner of your love for me, if bearing the name of my wife will give you some form of contentment, I won't take it away from you. It's I who've broken my word, so I will atone for it to the extent I can” (529–30). But there is one condition: no one is to discuss Dagny or their affair. Lillian senses a last way to shackle and control Hank; her account may be overdrawn, but it is not yet closed.

More widely, across the whole nation too many pillars that the looters had been counting on are gone. The looters' seemingly bottomless account is overdrawn. Rearden Steel fails for the first time to deliver an order on schedule; Danagger is gone and coal shipments are late; Colorado's great industrialists have disappeared and the state is in its death throes; the achievement that could have fueled the Second Renaissance, the John Galt Line, is soon to be closed. Even d'Anconia Copper cannot get its shipments to the United States; they cannot get past Ragnar Danneskjöld.

So who are the looters still counting on? Dagny and Taggart Transcontinental.

But the looters evade this fact, supposedly safe in their belief that producers are a fact of nature like the sun: just as the sun will rise each day, so they believe producers will continue to produce. The looters can impose whatever schemes they dream of, and there will always be someone else to loot. The man sent from Washington, Mr. Weatherby, won't entertain the repeal of even one control; we “wouldn't even consider listening to any talk on the subject” (508). And the one person in the boardroom whom he does not need to take notice of is Dagny. No one in that boardroom wants to know what policies have brought Taggart Transcontinental to its desperate state, yet if the John Galt Line is to be closed, the Board wants it to be Dagny's decision, since she is the producer who will, somehow, make things work out.

Francisco comes to Dagny when the decision is made to kill the John Galt Line, hoping against hope that *her* account is overdrawn and ready to be closed: that she has seen enough of the looters' world and is ready to quit. But as Francisco expected, though in pain, Dagny will

keep going; for her cause, she will tear up the John Galt Line and use it to support Taggart's transcontinental system.

Although Washington can count on Dagny, it is not sure it can continue to count on Hank—not after his trial. The looters are uncertain they can control him. Jim sees his opportunity: his Washington account is overdrawn—Mouch is no longer in his pocket and Jim is losing the looters' magic title of "the public"—but he hopes to replenish his account by delivering Hank to them (via Lillian's knowledge of Dagny and Hank's affair).

Chapter VI: Miracle Metal

The looters' whole policy consists of counting on the mind while evading its nature and existence. If the looters faced what the mind was and what its requirements were, they would see the futility of their own policy and would have to face the motivation that actually drives them: hatred of values and of existence. This is the meaning of the directive issued in this chapter, Directive 10-289.

The directive attempts to freeze the economy: it attaches employees to their jobs and business owners to their businesses, "voluntarily" turns over patents and copyrights to the government, and declares that everyone must continue to produce, spend, and earn whatever they have been producing, spending, and earning. It is a moratorium on brains. It is an attempt to have a functioning industrial economy without the need for any thought or judgment on behalf of the economy's participants. It is an attempt to escape the either-or, absolute nature of reality: to enjoy the looted products of intelligence, while denying the need for intelligence to function, denying even the existence of intelligence.

But even the looters have trouble maintaining this gross of an evasion. They are frightened by so openly attacking intelligence, sensing that they are still counting on it. "It was to avoid moments such as this that all the complex twisting of their minds had been devised. They wished the directive to go into effect. They wished it could be put into effect without words, so that they would not have to know that what they were doing was what it was" (536). The more intellectual of the looters supplies the cover to cloak that which they're evading. "Naming the unnamed in all their minds," Ferris declares:

There is no such thing as the intellect. A man's brain is a social product. . . . A genius is an intellectual scavenger and a greedy hoarder of the ideas which rightfully belong to society, from which he stole them. All thought is theft. If we do away with private fortunes, we'll have a fairer distribution of wealth. If we do away with the genius, we'll have a fairer distribution of ideas. (540)

But they cannot escape the consequences of Directive 10-289, which is to drive out whatever remnants of intelligence still existed in their system. Hank's employees start to quit, industrialists vanish, Dagny resigns.

If the looters scheme is to have a chance of even momentarily succeeding, they need Hank to sign the Gift Certificate for Rearden Metal. Ferris threatens to expose Hank's affair with Dagny. In that moment and through a characteristically ruthless act of mind, Hank grasps the view of existence that underlies their code and the genesis of his own pain.

"It was proper," he thinks to himself, "that they should now call it 'Miracle Metal'—a miracle was the only name *they* could give to those ten years and to the faculty from which Rearden Metal was born—a miracle was all that the Metal could be in their eyes, the product of

an unknown, unknowable cause, an object in nature, not to be explained, but to be seized, like a stone or a weed” (560). They count on his mind, yet torment him for exercising it.

You need the products of a man’s ability—yet you proclaim that productive ability is a selfish evil and you turn the degree of a man’s productiveness into the measure of his loss. We lived by that which we held to be good and punished that which we held to be evil. You live by that which you denounce as evil and punish that which you know to be good. . . . Such was the code that the world had accepted and such was the key to the code: that it hooked man’s love of existence to a circuit of torture. (561)

His guilt was to put aside his mind and accept this view, not in the material but in the spiritual realm: he damned his love of existence by damning his desire to physically possess the spirit that was Dagny’s. “My crime was committed when I said to her [Lillian], ‘By every standard of mine, to maintain our marriage will be a vicious fraud. But my standards are not yours. I do not understand yours, I never have, but I will accept them’” (565).

But precisely as a man of the mind, not a looter or a mystic, Hank does not accept the miraculous. He knows that there “is no escape from justice, nothing can be unearned or unpaid for in the universe, neither in matter or in spirit—and if the guilty do not pay, then the innocent have to pay it” (565). Through Hank’s own reproaches and shame at their affair, Dagny has been paying for his crime. This injustice must end. He is a man who pays his way. He signs the Gift Certificate, having now fulfilled the real sentence imposed on him at his trial: he has understood the tenet—the soul-body dichotomy—through which “the victims come to sanction a code that pronounced them guilty of the fact of existing” (561).

Chapter VII: The Moratorium on Brains

In this chapter, the full effects of the moratorium on brains are being felt. Taggart Transcontinental, like most businesses, is losing its best men, replaced by human driftwood and scum. The deserters, as the men who quit are called, roam the countryside directionless. The nation is disintegrating, and in response Washington dispenses men like Chick Morrison to boost morale.

Dagny has been replaced by Clifton Locey. No one at Taggart Transcontinental now dares exercise his intelligence to make a decision, because he is the one who will be blamed. No one wants to run the railroad, only hold his job. Each tries to shift the burden of judgment to someone else’s shoulders. Locey pretends to be in charge but has no thoughts of his own and tries to mimic Dagny’s actions on “anything that matters” (569). To Locey and the other looters, the world is not either-or but neither-nor. The choice is not between a world of intelligence or a world devoid of intelligence. Somehow, it’s possible to have neither a world of intelligence nor a world devoid of intelligence; “like everything they do today,” Willers observes, “it is and it ain’t, at the same time” (568).

But in fact the world is either-or—and life and production in it demand intelligence. Outlaw intelligence and catastrophes like the tunnel disaster must ensue. In a world which teaches people that the only absolute is the cries and wishes of men in power—that the way to get people to act is through fear—and that men do not live by reason—in such a world, what else is to be expected? In such a world, both the Dagny Taggarts and the Bill Brents are replaced by men who will send a coal engine into the Taggart Tunnel.

But the victims are not blameless. The passengers support and echo all the ideas that led to Directive 10-289: “there was not a man aboard the train who did not share one or more of” these ideas (607). The conductor who allows the train into the tunnel just before deserting, thinks to himself:

there had been a time when he had placed the safety of the passengers above his own Now, he felt a contemptuous indifference and no desire to save them. They had asked for and accepted Directive 10-289 . . . they went on living and daily turning away in evasion from the kind of verdicts that the Unification Board was passing on defenseless victims—why shouldn’t he now turn away from them? (604)

In the world of Directive 10-289, what mode of existence is left to men? Either “to be a looter who robs disarmed victims,” Danneskjöld tells Hank, or “to be a victim who works for the benefit of his own despoilers” (575).

But Danneskjöld chooses another path: to use his mind to take up arms in defense of human ability. Hank can neither condemn Danneskjöld’s chosen path—nor the path of those who’ve simply stepped out, like Wyatt and Danagger—nor can he follow it. Hank is still caught in the middle. He cannot renounce his mills and would rather go down with the last of his world, because he can see no possibility of a different kind of world. Yet when Danneskjöld tells Hank that despite the Gift Certificate no one will manufacture Rearden Metal, Hank wants to laugh—but he stops himself, sensing that he would never see his mills again. He senses that Danneskjöld is right and another mode of existence *is* possible; as Danneskjöld will later describe it to Galt, Hank is hanging by a thin thread.

Chapter VIII: By Our Love

Whatever the looters are fundamentally moved by, their victims—and those actually fighting the looters—are moved by their love of values. This is what we see in this chapter.

Dagny has given up Taggart Transcontinental and is in pain at the loss of an irreplaceable loved one. She wants to create, but there is nowhere to build a railroad to and no one to build it for. She is losing her right to Hank’s love: “He could help her to live; he could not help her to decide for what purpose she wished to go on living” (612). Even worse than giving up Taggart Transcontinental is giving up her quest to find the secret of the motor and the world of unlimited achievement that it represents: “it was her last link to the future. To kill seemed like an act, not of murder, but of suicide” (612).

Dagny cannot understand how she has lost if evil is in fact irrational and impotent; yet nothing can shake her conviction that this *is* the nature of evil, that only the good is potent and real. She can find no solution. The clarity of her either-or world has been replaced by the nightmare of a neither-nor realm. “It seems monstrously wrong to surrender the world to the looters,” she says, “and monstrously wrong to live under their rule. I can neither give up nor go back. I can neither exist without work nor work as a serf” (618).

What she now feels about the world is what she has felt all along about Francisco. In her world, one is either a great industrialist or a playboy—but Francisco seemed to be neither the great man she had known him to be nor the worthless scoundrel the newspapers had said he had become. In the ten years since he left her, she could neither lose her feeling for him nor retain it.

Yet in her misery at losing her greatest love, Taggart Transcontinental, it is Francisco who comes to her. She discovers his secret.

She learns that he is still moved by the same love as she. Out of his love for d'Anconia Copper and for her, he was one of the first men to quit. He is now systematically destroying d'Anconia Copper. Francisco refuses to divorce spirit and matter, as the looters' code demands: d'Anconia Copper is just so much meaningless material when its spirit is gone, he tells her, when its purpose has gone from serving life to serving the enemies of life. "We can never lose the things we live for," he tells Dagny. "We may have to change their form at times, if we've made an error, but the purpose remains the same and the forms are ours to make" (615). The key to Dagny's dilemma, he tells her, is that she has made her enemies possible. "By accepting punishment, not for any sins, but for our virtues, we betrayed our code and made theirs possible. . . . They count on you to feel that no effort is too great in the service of your love. . . . Your unrequited rectitude is the only hold they have upon you. . . . The day when you'll discover it is the only thing they dread. You must learn to understand them. You won't be free of them, until you do" (619).

But at this point Dagny still cannot understand the looters, nor does she see how she has made their code possible. When she hears of the tunnel disaster, she runs back in the name of her love to save Taggart Transcontinental. By returning, however, she once again saves Jim, who was about to resign. What she cannot yet grasp is that what she has saved is a being consumed with hatred of her, of life, of existence—"hatred as his claim against the universe, as a justification, as a right, as an absolute"—and that she is granting him this right (624).

Both Dagny and Hank now realize, however, that they're being held hostage by their love of life, but "price is no object any longer" (632). They will go down with their rails and mills, with the last remnants of what they love. Neither Dagny nor Hank can conceive of an alternative existence, of a world of unlimited achievement that does not contain looters. Why? Because Dagny and Hank cannot yet see that they've made the looters' whole view of existence—and so the looters themselves—possible.

Chapter IX: The Face Without Pain or Fear or Guilt

This is a chapter filled with fear, with pain, and with guilt. We witness Dagny's fear that Francisco will break and kill Hank, the man who slapped him; her pain in thinking that she lives in a world where her vision of man's limitless potential is to remain unrealized; her guilt in now thinking that it may have been she who deserted Francisco, not the other way around. We see Hank's pain from discovering that his hated rival, Francisco, is the first man who slept with Dagny. And we see Hank's guilt after denouncing a man he loves and who set him free from guilt—and who, it seems, also loved him. While Hank was driven to inflict pain on Francisco, Francisco refused to inflict the pain he knew he could have on Hank.

The source of all this suffering is divided loyalties in the pursuit of the same love—when the actual choice is either-or. Dagny thinks she is serving the man with an "intransigent mind and an unlimited ambition" who is "in love with his own life" (635). But this man, Francisco tells her, "permits no divided allegiance, no war between your mind and your body, no gulf between your values and your actions, no tributes to Caesar. He permits no Caesars" (636). Atlantis is blocked to Dagny because she is supporting its destroyers; she thinks if she works hard enough she can outlast the looters: "They need me. They know it. It's *my* terms that I'll make them accept" (636). She doesn't understand that their terms are non-negotiable: they want her dead.

Hank too is divided. He is driven to lash out at Francisco because he cannot accept that within him which responds to Francisco, even though he senses the liberation it involves; Francisco's world is one of betrayal and of renunciation, but Hank knows one must never renounce that which one loves.

And it is only the divided allegiance of Dagny and Hank that has the power to cause pain in Francisco—and in Galt. Francisco is out of reach of the looters; they can no longer inflict their tortures on him. But his pain is real: at losing Dagny, at being prohibited from defending his love for her, of being unable to answer Hank's insults and face him openly. When he stops himself from killing Hank, Dagny knows "that she was witnessing Francisco d'Anconia's greatest achievement" (641). Francisco is able to stop himself by reminding himself of his loyalty to that which he loves—undivided loyalty to the cause and to the man Dagny thinks she is serving. Francisco "was looking at Rearden, but it was not Rearden that he was seeing. He looked as if he were facing another presence in the room and as if his glance were saying: If this is what you demand of me, then even this is yours, yours to accept and mine to endure, there is no more than this in me to offer you, but let me be proud to know that I can offer so much" (641).

It is Dagny and Hank's tribute to Caesar that has produced "some vast, impersonal suffering that had made them all its victims" (641).

By contrast, the nameless Taggart Transcontinental worker possesses a face that looks as if it has "never known pain or fear or guilt" (652). Yet two events from Dagny's world even have the power to disturb his face's guiltless serenity. He's disturbed to learn that Quentin Daniels has been working to discover the secret of the motor—yet his shock turns to laughter when he hears Daniels's reasons for quitting. And he actually rushes out of the cafeteria when he learns that Dagny is sleeping with Hank. The cause of his pain comes from the divided allegiance of the woman he loves.

Chapter X: The Sign of the Dollar

The country is now rapidly decaying. As Dagny rides east to reach Daniels, she thinks of what a difference a month under the moratorium on brains has made. When she reaches the prairies, she sees "the remnants of towns" and "the skeletons of factories," now only "monuments to how much had been achieved on the edge of nature's void by men who had once been free to achieve" (655). It had once been a nation ruled by the dollar.

In Jeff Allen's recounting of the fate of the Twentieth Century Motor Company, we see the cause of the world's destruction in inception and in microcosm: what ideal, brought into full reality, replaced the rule of the dollar.

"The plan," Allen tells Dagny,

was that everybody in the factory would work according to his ability, but would be paid according to his need. . . . None of us knew just how the plan would work, but every one of us thought that the next fellow knew it. And if anybody had doubts, he felt guilty and kept his mouth shut. . . . Hadn't we heard it all our lives—from our parents and our schoolteachers and our ministers, and in every newspaper we ever read and every movie and every public speech? Hadn't we always been told that this was righteous and just? (660–61)

The result was anything but righteous and just—as employees tried to hide their ability and exhibit their need—as competition turned from one of achievements to one of sores—and as the best men took the role of suckers and the worst, the role of bloodsuckers.

The originators and profiteers of the plan were the Starnes heirs. “But profit,” says Allen, “depends on what it is you’re after. And what the Starnes heirs were after, no money on earth could buy” (666). Eric Starnes was after causeless love; Gerald Starnes wanted causeless prestige and envious stares; Ivy Starnes wanted to hold the lives of her betters in her hands, degrading these men to the status of her bootlickers. But those who merely voted for the plan were not innocent: they secretly felt that their need would entitle them to the products of the ability of others.

The ideal the Starnes heirs implemented in the factory is the ideal now engulfing the nation. Gone is what the United States once was, a nation ruled by the dollar sign, the sign which stands “for achievement, for success, for ability, for man’s creative power” (683).

And it is this ideal that Dagny is inadvertently sanctioning. The passengers on her frozen train need transportation; they contemptuously demand that Dagny provide it, since hers is the ability, theirs is the need. And in providing it, Dagny warrants no acknowledgment or consideration, not even the consideration of being protected from the marauding gangs of raiders. A woman onboard screams at Dagny: “I’ll report you to the Unification Board!” and Kellogg underscores for Dagny the meaning of her reply: “if I give you the train to get you within sight or hearing of your Board” (677).

It is precisely this sanction that Galt withdraws when he walks out of the Twentieth Century Motor Company. He will teach the world that it is either-or: either the monstrous ideal of the Starnes heirs or the ideal of the dollar sign.

But although Dagny is unknowingly supporting the wrong ideal, consciously she is still fighting for hers. She is shocked to find how little of her world is left: her only request of Kellogg, should she die, is to tell Willers to give Allen a job and to tell Hank what happened to her. But she continues to fight for her world’s remnants, unwilling to “abandon an incalculable wealth such as the brain of Quentin Daniels,” ready to give her life if only she could take the destroyer’s first, ready to go down with her plane in pursuit of her love (696).

But as she is crashing, she doesn’t think she’ll die. Another type of existence must be possible—it must be reachable—it must be real.

PART III: A IS A

In part III, all the contradictions and mysteries, small and large, are resolved. A world of identity is restored.

Dagny finds the valley in which the cigarettes with a dollar sign are manufactured and learns why Danneskjöld became a pirate. She discovers what has happened to all the men who vanished—and learns why Akston was working as a cook in a diner, Kellogg wouldn’t take the promotion she offered him, and the brakeman seemed to be whistling Halley’s Fifth Concerto. She discovers who the inventor of the motor is—and who the destroyer is. She learns that an existence free from the looters is possible: her world of unobstructed achievement is real, lying before her in the valley.

Part III is dominated by the figure of John Galt. He is the man who unrelentingly faces the facts for what they are. No illusions, no evasions, no misrepresentations can deflect him from identifying the nature of what is.

It is Galt who gives identity to the principles and standards that have governed the lives of those he has convinced to strike, but which they were unable to name. His new moral code is the foundation for the future of unlimited achievement that the valley represents.

It is Galt who gives identity to the nature of the enemy they all face. He defines the full meaning of the code the world accepts, the meaning that is always evaded, and he identifies the source of this code in the view of existence shared by the mystics of spirit and the mystics of muscle.

It is Galt who identifies the danger to the men of the mind of divorcing spirit from matter. He shows them the nature of their battle and how to fight the enemy: they must withdraw their sanction of the mystics' moral code and the mystics' view of existence. He thereby makes the mystics—and the world—face the true nature of their creed and of their own souls.

It is Galt who shows Dagny why she is mistaken about the looters, why she can't win her battle, and why she never had to take the looters' world seriously. It is Galt who teaches her—and the world—the full meaning of A is A.

Chapter I: Atlantis

Dagny crash lands in Atlantis. Another type of existence *is* possible. In the valley, men are free to think, to work, to trade, and to profit, each to the extent of his ability. It is a realm governed by values—the tokens of which are the gold coins Mulligan mints—in which justice and reason rule. It is a world in which spirit and matter are united. It is a world in which men reverently dedicate themselves to their own lives. “What is it that you're all doing here?” she asks Galt. “Living,” he answers. “She had never heard that word sound so real” (713).

Dagny learns what it took for these men to reach and build Atlantis. She learns that Galt has called on strike the one kind of men who had never struck before, the men of the mind. They are on strike against a code that worships human incompetence and are through making terms with their enemies. Galt has withdrawn the moral sanction they had given to the mystics and granted it instead to those who had earned it but had never received it before: the strikers. Dagny hears the specific reasons why the men in Mulligan's living room quit and the price each was willing to pay. They had to be willing to give up their achievements in the world, realizing that there is no meaning to the matter they left behind absent the mind—the spirit—that animated it. They had to be willing to give up the world for a time being, knowing that this is the attitude hardest to attain: “what we now feel for their world is that emotion which they preach as an ideal: indifference—the blank—the zero—the mark of death” (741). Galt and the others went on strike without the expectation that the looters' world would collapse in their lifetimes: “We knew only that this was the only way we cared to live” (748).

Sitting before the men in Mulligan's room, she sees the *identity* of all she has sought. “*This* was the Taggart Terminal,” she thinks to herself, the destination of its rails, the goal it was meant to achieve (748). “It was for the sake of this that she had dedicated herself to the rail of Taggart Transcontinental, as to the body of a spirit yet to be found. She had found it, everything she had ever wanted, it was here in this room, reached and hers” (748–49). The man at the end of the rails, whom she was serving and whom she loves, is standing before her, real.

But the price of reaching Atlantis, she thinks, is the very rail that has brought her to her destination. Although Dagny and Galt are in love, they are still pitted against one another. Galt knows the choice is either-or and is serenely confident that his judgment and choice are correct. He's strikingly open with Dagny; when she seeks to spare him the need to name the fact that he

stole Daniels away from her, he names the fact proudly; he tells her he took Francisco and Danagger from her world, fully aware of the consequences to her; he deliberately shows her all the men he's taken away and openly tells her he's making it as difficult as possible for her to choose to leave the valley. More intimately, he tells her that when he saw her plane as he was flying away with Daniels, it "was the one and only time when I didn't think of you" (712). Galt has the simplicity and severity of a man who stands before the inexorable fact "that the truth is the truth" (725).

Dagny, by contrast, is conflicted: she doesn't know what is true. Galt is the destroyer she has sworn to shoot on sight, but he is also the inventor of the motor whom she wants to sleep with. She thinks that the valley *is* the Taggart Terminal, but also that she would be betraying Taggart Transcontinental by remaining here. She thinks Hank's presence in the valley would be natural, but simultaneously impossible. She thinks it would be absurd for Galt to submit to the looters by returning to the world, but not absurd for her. She is torn by a contradiction—which Galt tells her was responsible for destroying the John Galt Line and which she must resolve in order to enter Atlantis.

Chapter II: The Utopia of Greed

What is the nature of Atlantis? It is a realm where the inhabitants proudly and *greedily* dedicate themselves to the pursuit of their highest values. It is a realm where sacrifice is banished and love of life rules. This is what we witness in this chapter.

Dagny is desperately in love with Galt but she doesn't have the right to sleep with him. When she hears of Hank grimly bearing the news of her death and of the Comet crawling toward San Francisco, she feels she is betraying both by remaining in the valley—but when she thinks of leaving Galt and the existence he has created, she feels she would be betraying him. She feels homeless, "as if she were suspended in space between this valley and the rest of the earth, with no right to either" (763). She feels caught in a reality that one must never accept, "the view that man was ever to be drawn by some vision of the unattainable shining ahead, doomed ever to aspire, but not to achieve. *Her* life and *her* values could not bring her to that" (772).

Dagny wants to get word to Hank that she is alive, but she will not ask Galt for a special exception from the rules of the valley; she will not sacrifice the meaning of her love for Galt by pretending that her love for Hank is the greater. Yet it is in the name of all that she loves—of that which gives her love for Galt meaning—that Dagny chooses to leave Galt and return to the world of Rearden Steel and Taggart Transcontinental. If there is even one chance to win back the earth from the looters, to win that which is rightfully Galt's—she must take it.

Francisco too is moved by love. His love for Dagny was Galt's best argument against Francisco: he went on strike to win the kind of world she deserved (as she is now trying to win for Galt). He misses breakfast with Danneskjöld and Galt for the first time in twelve years because he is searching for the wreckage of her plane. Nor will Francisco sacrifice his love for Dagny by pretending that he no longer desires her. "Will I want to sleep with you? Desperately," he tells Dagny. "Will I envy the man who does? Sure" (768). But he will also not commit the unspeakable act of asking her or Hank or Galt to sacrifice their values and desires for his sake. He knows that they all are, rightfully, moved by the same source: "by our love for a single value, for the highest potentiality of our own existence" (768). This is what no one must be asked to betray.

Hank too is desperately in love with Dagny, and continues to search for her crash site when almost everyone else has given up. Like Dagny, if he sees even one chance for success, he will continue to fight for his values. It is only a failure of knowledge, not a failure of love, that keeps the valley hidden from him.

It is this selfishness of soul that Galt exudes and which, as the leader of the strike, he has taught the strikers to refuse to do penance for. Galt is passionately in love with his life, with his capacity to live, with the earth, and with Dagny—so passionately that he will accept no substitute, no halfway existence, no aspiration to be sought but never to be reached. Consequently, he will never divorce his end from the means necessary to achieve it; for Galt, “cost is an absolute which cannot be escaped” (780). He doesn’t try to win the place he could have in the world, because he knows the price: torture at the hands of an evil whose existence he would have made possible. He didn’t go to Dagny in her lonely office when she was completing the John Galt Line, despite his desire for her and hers for him, because he knew that at that point she was his enemy and would have had to try to stop him. He holds Dagny in the valley for a month because he wants her there. He wants to sleep with her, but tells her, “It’s your acceptance of this place that I want. What good would it do me, to have your physical presence without any meaning? That’s the kind of faked reality by which most people cheat themselves of their lives. I’m not capable of it. And neither are you” (780). And he knows that Francisco and Hank are both in love with Dagny, but Galt will not sacrifice his love for the sake of either one of them; he tells Francisco “I would have given anything to let it be otherwise, except that which is beyond giving” (810).

Stadler is thus Galt’s worst enemy. Stadler’s is a radically selfless soul: he has consciously betrayed that which he loved, hoping that he could evade the fact that “cost is an absolute which cannot be escaped.”

In the name of an end divorced from means—of the desire to do theoretical research without the bother of having to earn the material means necessary—Stadler was willing to place his mind in service of the looters. In the process, he had to destroy that which he professed to love: the mind. He somehow expected Galt to work under the orders of Floyd Ferris; Francisco, under the orders of Wesley Mouch; and Danneskjöld, under the orders of Simon Pritchett. And then, as rationalization of his betrayal of all that he loved, Stadler wails that nothing else is possible in the material world. “What I want you to understand,” Akston tells Dagny, “is the full evil of those who claim to have become convinced that this earth, by its nature, is a realm of malevolence where the good has no chance to win. . . . Let them check—before they grant themselves the unspeakable license of evil-as-necessity—whether they know what *is* the good and what are the conditions it requires” (790).

And it is out of love for the good that Galt chooses to return to the world: he will not give up that which he loves to the looters. He is certain Dagny is wrong and that her quest will fail, but knows that she must grasp the reason herself. She must not, however, commit Stadler’s sin and accept the contradiction that the ideal is the unreachable. “If you fail,” Galt tells her, “as men have failed in their quest for a vision that should have been possible, yet has remained forever beyond their reach—if, like them, you come to think that one’s highest values are not to be attained and one’s greatest vision is not to be made real—don’t damn this earth, as they did, don’t damn existence. You have seen the Atlantis they were seeking, it is here, it exists—but one must enter it naked and alone, with no rags from the falsehoods of centuries, with the purest clarity of mind” (812–13).

Chapter III: Anti-Greed

Dagny leaves the utopia of greed with one premise left to check: that the men of the world love their lives. And with the world near full collapse, and the looters desperate, their motivation surfaces. In this chapter, Dagny begins to see it.

Lillian tries to blackmail Dagny to appear on Scudder's radio program. Lillian boasts that for once Dagny will act as Lillian must act, by obeying a will other than her own. There is nothing Dagny can offer to prevent the blackmail, Lillian tells her, because "I'm devoid of greed. . . . I am doing it without gain. Without gain. Do you understand me?" (849). With an almost pleading tone in her voice, Lillian tells Dagny that it was she who took Rearden Metal from Hank. Dagny is beginning to see what moves them, although it "was not within the power of Dagny's consciousness ever to understand that plea or to know what response Lillian had hoped to find" (849). Lillian is seeking Dagny's acknowledgement and respect, as if Lillian's act of destroying a supreme value elevated her act into the realm of the important, as if the greatness of the value Lillian destroyed somehow made her act the greater one.

Jim too, Dagny thinks, is "going to pieces . . . the jerky impatience, the shrillness, the aura of panic were new" (839). Not even Jim's incompetent mind could believe that the new Railroad Unification Plan—a plan which purports to save the railroads by pooling all resources and revenues and then distributing the income based on need—could save Taggart Transcontinental. Jim frantically pretends the plan is practical, but his panic is palpable. "*This*," Dagny thinks to herself, "did not have even the rationality of a looter" (842). Dagny is beginning to realize that Jim's fundamental motivation is not wealth, even if looted wealth. "I see," she says quietly to Jim, and he seems to shake "with terror at that which the quiet 'I see' had acknowledged seeing" (842). She senses that the sanction Jim and his gang needs *has* to come from her, the victim—that in order for them to pretend that they belong in her shining realm, not their sewer of an existence, it is she who must concede this fact. She wonders what level of "inner degradation" these men must reach in order to require this level of self-deception (846).

This same form of inner degradation and self-deception is certainly present in Stadler. He is a man devoid of greed—of the selfishness of soul necessary to make the ideal, real. He does not want to have to bother with the effort and struggle to bring material form to his spiritual vision, to his noble pursuit of "pure" truth. Yet he still requires a laboratory and funding—how is he to get them? By seizing them. But how can he justify this? By rationalizing his action. The creation of material goods requires no thought and no intellect, he constantly tells himself; they are the products of irrational, money-chasing brutes; these products exist to be seized and this seizure is not an act directed against the mind. Nor is it even Stadler's responsibility to ensure that the work of his mind is put to the use of good and not evil, since ideals are unachievable in this world of irrational men. Over and over he tells himself, "like a voodoo formula which one recites when it is needed and beyond which one must not look: *What can you do when you have to deal with people?*" (818).

Stadler comes to *need* a world of irrational men ruled by force—because an opposite world would topple his rationalizations. This is the meaning of his sanctioning of Project X, an instrument of brute force intended to rule a mindless population. Stadler cannot face the fact that there are men who are *not* irrational, that another form of existence among men is possible, that men like Hank, Dagny, Francisco, and the inventor of the motor *are* exponents of the mind—because then he could not justify looting them. He must declare such men impractical—then evade their existence—then seek their elimination. He begins by labeling Galt an impractical idealist; he will end by demanding that Galt be killed.

Stadler's drawn-out suicide begins as he walks to the speaker's scaffold to deliver the speech extolling Project X that Ferris has prepared for him: "the crowd was about to witness an act of destruction more terrible than the destruction of the farm" (830). A young reporter cries to Stadler to tell the country the truth about Project X. The reporter's face is the only one in the crowd that exhibits a spark of ability, but Stadler denounces the man as a disloyal punk with treasonable motives; the reporter's was a young face, possessing hazel eyes with "a tinge of green" (831).

Who is Stadler's heir? Cuffy Meigs, whom Dagny discovers is the Director of Unification. He is a man the world considers the exemplar of greed: a thug who seizes whatever he can get his hands on, without concern for causes or consequences. "In the long run," he tells Dagny—stating what Jim and Jim's teachers have been saying forever, but stating it as almost self-evident fact, in light of which Meigs will simply act accordingly—"we'll all be dead" (843). He is a man devoid of thought and so of greed: he has no values, no capacity to value, no desire to give material form to any spiritual vision, no inkling of where the loot he seizes comes from.

But in this chapter, in contrast to the inner degradation and self-deception of the looters, we also see the souls of Dagny and Hank. On Scudder's radio program Dagny openly and proudly tells the world that she and Hank "are those who do not disconnect the values of their minds from the actions of their bodies," those who are driven by greed for spiritual values given material form, "those who make steel, railroads and happiness" (853). Afterward, Hank tells her he has discovered the source of his life's pain: his acceptance of "the one tenet by which they destroy a man before he's started, the killer-tenet: the breach between his mind and body" (857–58). To win back that which was rightfully his and redeem their relationship, here at its end, Hank declares his love for her and the source of that love. Despite what he has lost—both Rearden Metal and Dagny—he knows he is *richer* than he was because his capacity to value, his mind, is now whole.

Chapter IV: Anti-Life

To be anti-greed, we learn in this chapter, is to be anti-life. What Dagny must come to understand about Jim and his gang is what Cheryl discovers here—the sight of which drives her to suicide.

Jim has just helped plan d'Anconia Copper's nationalization and wants to celebrate his existence. But what is that existence? This is what he has spent his life evading—and the question is now haunting him. Tonight he wants the pleasure to be himself. "To be himself—he thought, in the drugged, precarious state of floating past the deadliest of his blind alleys, the one that led to the question of what was himself" (873).

Jim realizes he's indifferent to the money he'll seize by the nationalization; "in full truth," he realizes with a shudder of dread, "he had never cared for money" (867). "What do you want?" his enemy pursuer keeps asking (867). He boasts to Cheryl that men like Hank spend their lives "grubbing for their fortunes penny by penny" whereas he can acquire his at the snap of his fingers (869). But when she, who gives concrete form to his enemy pursuer, asks him why he hates Hank, he screams "I don't hate him!" (878). He then boasts to her that whatever such men do, "I can undo it. Let them build a track—I can come and break it, just like that!" He snapped his fingers. "Just like breaking a spine!" You want to break spines?—she asks. "I haven't said that!" Jim screams at Cheryl (879).

But Jim *does* want to break their spines. It is the only way he can hope to demonstrate his superiority—the superiority of his non-ability to their ability, of his nought to their reasoning, of his noneffort to their work, of his impotency to their power to create. He is, as Cherryl identifies, a looter of the spirit. The only way he can demonstrate the superiority of his spirit is by killing those who choose to be and to live. The celebration Jim was seeking, he senses before he sleeps with Lillian, is the admiration she exhibits for his power to destroy. But he dare not name this fact. “I can’t bring men down to their knees in admiration,” Lillian tells him, “but I can bring them to their knees” (899). “Shut up!” Jim screams in terror. But this is precisely what he experiences, when he sleeps with her in order to try to wound Hank. “It was not an act in celebration of life that he had wanted to perform—but an act in celebration of the triumph of impotence” (900).

It is this, Jim’s fundamental motivation, that Cherryl struggles to see and succeeds in seeing, knowing that the sight will destroy her.

Her marriage has been an orchestrated torture. Jim wants to be admired and loved, but without possessing any attribute worthy of admiration or love. In the end, the admiration and love *must* come from his victims, because only they can confirm the superiority of his impotence to their living power. He wants Cherryl to remain a hero-worshipping shop girl and “an incongruous freak” who is unable to make her way in the world (868). This would make her as abjectly dependent on him as he is on her—“two beggars chained to each other” as Cherryl describes it (903). It is she, the truly noble and spiritual person, who must give him his sense of spiritual superiority, while he acts to destroy all that she values and all that she is.

And it is Jim’s soul that rules the world. Cherryl can see no way to fight it or live with it. She does not have Dagny’s greater knowledge and certainty, and it is too late for her to learn from Dagny the absolutes she must hold fast to: to stand on her own judgment and, against Jim’s whole world, acknowledge that what is, is. Had Cherryl grown up around Dagny—as Eddie Willers did—Cherryl could have learned the things that Willers did: the possibility and principles of another kind of existence. But Cherryl makes the tragic mistake of thinking Jim is Dagny, and his anti-life soul destroys hers. It is another demonstration of the life-giving power of the men of the mind—and the consequence of their absence.

Chapter V: Their Brothers’ Keepers

In this chapter the results of the morality geared to those who are antilife—the morality that teaches men to sacrifice because they are their brothers’ keepers—are being felt across the nation.

The people of Nebraska, to take one of many examples, are sacrificed to those of Illinois, who consume the former’s stock seed. The same process is occurring at Taggart Transcontinental. Meigs is looting the last of Taggart Transcontinental’s supplies, with Dagny bearing the burden of trying to prevent a full collapse. As Taggart Transcontinental disintegrates, she must shift the burden of carrying it to the shoulders of the stronger, more vital parts that remain. A copper wire breaks in California and Dagny orders that Montana’s spare copper be sent there; a copper wire breaks in Montana and Dagny orders that Minnesota’s spare copper be sent there; a copper wire breaks in Minnesota and Dagny orders that the Taggart Terminal’s spare copper be sent there. Yet she only delays the inevitable: California descends into civil war, Montana’s copper mines are nationalized, and Minnesota’s harvest cannot be shipped—there is no transportation because the pull-peddlers have diverted the trains. When a copper wire breaks

in the Taggart Terminal, there is nothing left for Dagny to do but to try to return to the time of manual switches—to move backward—to move closer to the grave.

“There was no way to tell which devastation had been accomplished by the humanitarians and which by undisguised gangsters,” Dagny thinks to herself.

There was no way to tell which acts of plunder had been prompted by the charity-lust of the Lawsons and which by the gluttony of Cuffy Meigs. . . . Did it matter? . . . Both held the immolation of men as proper and both were achieving it. There wasn't even any way to tell who were the cannibals and who the victims—the communities that accepted as their rightful due the confiscated clothing or fuel of a town to the east of them, found, next week, their granaries confiscated to feed a town to the west. . . . Men had been pushed into a pit where, shouting that man is his brother's keeper, each was devouring his neighbor and was being devoured by his neighbor's brother. (914)

When Philip pleads with Hank for a job because he's Hank's brother—in sharp contrast to how the Wet Nurse at once eagerly and humbly asks Hank for a real job—Hank learns something more about the looters' creed of brotherly love. The enemy are men who *worship* pain. “I'm twisted by suffering, I'm made of undiluted suffering, that's my purity, that's my virtue,” they declare—and “you the untwisted one,” Hank thinks, “you the uncomplaining, yours is to relieve me of my pain” (931). Are such men human?

Dagny too learns from her encounter with her brother. More than ever, she senses that Jim both needs her and hates her, “as if, while clinging to her for support and protection against some nameless terror, his arms were sliding to embrace her and to plunge a knife into her back” (912). He pleads with her that he's her brother, that it's her duty to make him happy and that it is her sin if he suffers. She sees the kind of world he wants, a world where wishes rule, but she still cannot understand what could bring men to such a state of depravity. She attends the dinner Jim and his gang have invited her to, hoping that it is “the first step of their surrender. . . . But as she sat in the candlelight of the dining room, she felt certain that she had no chance; she felt restlessly unable to accept that certainty, since she could not grasp its reason, yet lethargically reluctant to pursue any inquiry” (944).

It is not that Dagny and Hank have no feelings for their true brothers—it is the vision of some brothers in spirit still remaining in the world that keeps them at work. It is for any men of the mind still left that Dagny is keeping the trains running—but when the terminal goes dark she realizes that there is not a single mind left on Taggart Transcontinental. The same is true for Hank. He is bored to death, forced by the looters' system to run his business as any criminal would. The only thing that still holds his attention are the farmers in Minnesota, “tenacious producers” who've somehow managed to survive and to produce a plentiful crop, and who need transportation. As he describes their plight to Dagny, there “was a look of intensity on his face, as if he were contemplating a rare, forgotten sight: a vision of *men*—and she knew what motive was still holding him to his job” (923). But the producers of Minnesota are soon sacrificed. Hank is almost through with the world. He laughs when he reads Francisco's message to the world. He was my friend, Hank thinks to himself, my comrade in arms, but having betrayed their brotherhood, Hank believes he has no right to seek out Francisco.

It is the world's code of brotherly love that Francisco blasts when he blows up his businesses on the day of d'Anconia Copper's nationalization. “Brother, you asked for it!” (925).

In full contrast to the world's code, there exists a man who lives by another code. In tunnels of the Taggart Terminal, Galt and Dagny sleep together. The moment is theirs. Galt will not give his mind to his brothers or their world, but he will take from them what he wants, what is his. Dagny too will not relinquish the question "what's in it for you?" or the quest for her own happiness (949). They want this moment and their joy—and they seize it. But as always, Galt will pay the cost to reach that which he desires, and in this case he knows the cost may be his life.

Chapter VI: The Concerto of Deliverance

In this chapter, Hank's family and the looters in Washington make a last, frantic attempt to—in Hank's words—"eat my mills and have them, too" (984). The attempt fails. Hank finally grasps their full natures and what they have been counting on, and when he does, he recaptures the vision of a world he had seen in his youth: a world of joy and unlimited action. He goes on strike.

When, at the request of his mother, Hank returns to his family's home for the last time, he finds that they are afraid he will quit—they recognize that out of self-preservation he should. But they don't know what to do if Hank is no longer there to exploit, and they fear the wrath of Washington if Hank deserts. But his sense of justice, which had once been their weapon against him, is now their implacable enemy. He would give them the benefit of every doubt when he could not understand their actions, their words, their feelings or their standards—thinking that, somehow, they must be like him and wish him well, as he once wished them well. "But he was through with granting respect to any terms other than his own" (971). He "would forgive miles of innocent errors of knowledge" but "would not forgive a single step taken in conscious evil" (972).

And theirs *is* conscious evil, driven by a monstrous motive, which he finally is able to identify: a hatred for values, for himself, for life. They don't want to live, they want to see him suffer and die. This, he finally understands, is why Lillian had married him, to destroy him by undercutting his moral integrity and his self-esteem. "For the same purpose and motive, for the same satisfaction, as others weave complex systems of philosophy to destroy generations, or establish dictatorships to destroy a country, so she, possessing no weapons except femininity, had made it her goal to destroy one man" (975). Hank's indifference toward her pleas forces Lillian to confront the motive that has governed her life, and the sight destroys her. Hank sees the irrationality of the looters' entire desperate scheme—the idea that Lillian could sully his moral purity by sleeping with Jim, as though "the moral stature of one is at the mercy of the action of another," and the idea that Washington could chain him to his job by threatening to hold Lillian and the rest of his family hostage (976).

But what makes these people think they can get away with this level of irrationality? This is the question that Hank faces as he sits across from the looters and hears them proposing the Steel Unification Plan. The plan will so obviously fail, yet the look in their faces says they believe they can get away with it. Why? Why do they think this? "You'll always produce," Ferris tells him, as if Hank, like all producers, is an absolute of nature, without conditions, requirements, standards, or needs, who will continue to produce no matter what (984). The first tumbler unlocking the answer falls into place. If Hank protests that under their plan he cannot continue to run his mills, they think it is *he*, not they, who is evading *reality*. "Well, after all," Lawson tells him, "you businessmen have kept predicting disasters for years, you've cried

catastrophe at every progressive measure and told us that we'll perish—but we haven't" (985). The second tumbler falls into place. But how can even they think this plan will work, in which Rearden Steel must produce according to its ability but the rewards are to be distributed according to others' need? "Oh, you'll do something," Jim cries (986). The final tumbler falls into place. Hank has given the looters more than a moral sanction: he has given them a *metaphysical* sanction.

He has sanctioned their entire view of existence. "Were they illogical in believing that they existed in an irrational universe? He had made it for them, he had provided it. . . . They, the impotent mystics, struggling to escape the responsibility of reason, had known that he, the rationalist, had undertaken to serve their whims. They had known that he had given them a blank check on reality—his was not to ask *why?*—theirs was not to ask *how?*" (986). (It is this sanction, above all, that Galt has refused to grant: Hank has protected the looters from their own irrationality; Galt ensures that they experience its full effects.) Without Hank Rearden, the view of existence on which the looters' code of death rests would not be possible.

Hank realizes that he now loves his mills more than ever, seeing for the first time their full meaning as products of his own spirit and vision of existence. But that meaning is gone in the irrational existence that is the looters' world, and the mills must be abandoned, "not as an act of treason, but as an act of loyalty to their actual meaning" (988). Rearden is ready to meet the avenger working for his deliverance—and Francisco comes to claim Hank as one of the strikers' own.

The courageous struggle that Hank undertakes to win his freedom is the same struggle, in a different form, that the Wet Nurse has to undertake. But the Wet Nurse, less knowledgeable and able than Hank, more crippled by the world's teachings, pays for his deliverance with his life. The boy tells Hank that he now knows that "it's crap, all those things they taught us"—that there are in reality absolutes that must never be faked—and that by sticking his neck out for the mills he's "just discovered . . . tonight, what it means, really to be alive" (991–92). These are the very things that Rearden has also had to discover. The way the boy looks at Hank's face—"the image of that which he had not known to be his values"—is the way Rearden now looks at his mills, finally seeing their full value and meaning (994). When the boy dies, Hank experiences the desire to kill the boy's teachers, who had destroyed the boy's hold on reason and convinced the boy that he lives in an irrational world. Unknowingly, the view of existence that had destroyed the boy is the view Hank had sanctioned. In the name of everything Hank loves, he is now through with aiding evil.

Chapter VII: "This Is John Galt Speaking"

The country learns that Hank Rearden has quit. It descends into greater chaos, violence erupting in many states. Newspapers try to negate the nature of what is happening by refusing to name it, all the while echoing the same moral slogans as always, declaring to the people that greed is the cause of their problems and love, self-denial, and self-sacrifice are the solution. Mr. Thompson, however, is to broadcast a "full report" identifying the nature of the world crisis and the path to renewal (1004). But he discovers that something is interfering with the radio broadcast signal; he orders his subordinates to solve the problem, but they can't. "Isn't there anybody around to obey an order?" he cries. "Isn't there a brain left in this country?" (1009). There isn't. Mr. Thompson's time is up. In this chapter, we find out why.

John Galt tells the world that he has withdrawn the men of the mind. The identity of the man behind all the mysterious events taking place in the world in the past twelve years is revealed. And Galt gives full identity to that which everyone has been struggling *not* to see.

This is a moral crisis, he tells the people of the world, but not in the way they are pretending. The destruction they see around them is not a product of man's depraved nature or his willingness to sin; it is a product of them practicing their virtues and morality fully, with no one left to shield them from the consequences. There is no one left, because the men of the mind are on strike.

Your ideal had an implacable enemy, which your code of morality was designed to destroy. I have withdrawn that enemy. . . . I have removed the source of all those evils you were sacrificing one by one. . . . Men do not live by the mind, you say? I have withdrawn those who do. The mind is impotent, you say? I have withdrawn those whose mind isn't. There are values higher than the mind, you say? I have withdrawn those for whom there aren't. . . . 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. (1010)

Galt states the standards and terms of the strikers—which he identified for them for the first time—and why they will accept no substitute. Galt states their view of existence—of a universe ruled by the law of identity and graspable only by the mind, a realm of absolutes whose price of admission is reason, a world in which all man's values are achievable if only he is moved by the spirit of logic. And Galt explains what this view of existence demands: a new moral code, the morality of life.

But this is not the world's moral code. Its code endures because people dare not face its true meaning. Galt names it. He shows why the code of sacrifice is the morality of death. And he explains the motive, the warped view of existence, of the preachers of that code, who turned the gift of existence and the virtues of thought, of ability, of intelligence, of reason, of competence, of production—into sins to be atoned for.

There can be no compromise or halfway between life and death, Galt tells the world, or between the morality of life and the morality of death. It is either-or—and the individuals remaining in the world must make a choice.

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. (1052)

To make the proper choice, they must identify how the morality of death has distorted their conception of morality—how it has turned their nascent self-esteem against themselves and how it has led them to conclude that morality is a necessary evil, that compromise is always desirable, and that the men of the mind are their exploiters and enemies.

And when they identify these facts and choose to ally themselves with the morality of reason and life, they must stop supporting evil: they should go on strike and be ready to join Galt and the rest of the men of the mind when Galt decides it is time to return to the world.

Chapter VIII: The Egoist

As the looters' world crumbles, the better men remaining in that world heed Galt's call to strike: some refuse promotions, others stop showing up for work altogether, and still others retreat into their own minds. They've been armed with the necessary knowledge and courage by the man whose likes the world had never before seen: a true egoist. "Do you realize what sort of egoist you are?" Jim cries at Galt. "'Do you?'" asked Galt, looking straight at him" (1113). *This* is the meaning of the chapter.

Galt said in his speech that he does not accept the unearned in guilt or in values. Here, in action, we see the meaning of that statement and the kind of egoist Galt is. He loves Dagny and wants to be with her, but he readily acknowledges the price: she is not yet ready to quit. When she comes to his apartment, his is "a smile of radiant greeting" (1089). He expected her to break and to need to see him, he welcomes her, he is at ease, even though he knows that what he predicted has come to pass. If his enemies were to find him, it was Dagny who would have to lead them to him.

Mr. Thompson and the other looters are paralyzed after Galt's speech, unable to determine what to do. It is Dagny who tells them: give up. "Let those who can, take over. *He* knows what to do. You don't. *He* is able to create the means of human survival. You aren't" (1073). Mr. Thompson thanks her—she doesn't understand why. "She might have something there," he says to Mouch. "*He knows what to do*" (1074). This is the origin of their plan to force Galt to support them, to harness his mind to live for them, to make him the nation's Economic Dictator. But first they must find him. They don't have the capacity to recognize him: Mouch passes over Galt's name, the name of an "unskilled railroad laborer," when they are looking for Galt (1082). But Stadler—who still has enough of a mind left to remember the homeland he has betrayed—tells them that "she's one of *his* kind," she has the capacity to recognize Galt, and so Mr. Thompson orders her followed (1075).

Galt foresaw all this and accepts it. "Gather your strength," he tells Dagny. "It will happen. Don't regret it. I won't. You haven't seen the nature of our enemies. You'll see it now. If I have to be the pawn in the demonstration that will convince you, I'm willing to be—and to win you from them, once and for all. You didn't want to wait any longer? Oh, Dagny, Dagny, neither did I!" (1091–92).

The looters capture Galt, but he proves to be the "toughest bastard" they've ever faced (1107). He is what they feared most: a man who loves his life so much that he is not open to dealing with them. He knows that they have nothing to offer him. "What I've got to offer you is your life," Mr. Thompson tells him.

"It's not yours to offer, Mr. Thompson," said Galt softly. . . . "do you see what I meant when I said [on the radio] that a zero can't hold a mortgage over life. It's I who'd have to grant you that kind of mortgage—and I don't. The removal of a threat is not a payment, the negation of a negative is not a reward, the withdrawal of your armed hoodlums is not an incentive, the offer not to murder me is not a value." (1102)

Mr. Thompson, the man who can't be bothered with ideas, *orders* Galt to think. "How will your guns make me do that, Mr. Thompson?" (1103).

In identifying and exposing the unadulterated meaning of the morality of death, Galt, the true egoist, forces them to confront their deepest motivation. The result is inner terror. "I'll tell

you more,” Galt says to Mr. Thompson, “I know that I want to live much more intensely than you do. I know that that’s what you’re counting on. I know that you, in fact, do not want to live at all. I want it. And because I want it so much, I will accept no substitute.” “That’s not true!” Mr. Thompson cries, leaping to his feet (1104).

“*You* are the man who has to be destroyed!” Stadler concludes as he tries to justify his life to Galt (1119). In that moment Stadler realizes that he is the antiegoist, the man who dedicated his life to the destruction of that which he valued most.

And through Galt being the pawn in the demonstration, Dagny too finally sees the nature of the looters. She first witnesses Stadler’s savage hatred for Galt; her glance at Stadler, which “began as a shock of astonishment,” ends “as an obituary” (1073). But at that point she still thinks the others will give in, and that there won’t be a “looters’ government within ten days” (1078). Yet that government drags on, its calls to negotiate with John Galt pour out, and the nation’s misery continues. The looters capture Galt, and the contrast between him and them—and all the people who accept the world’s code—forces Dagny to confront the question: do they want to live? (1109, 1111).

And she must now determine *her* highest value: Galt or the world of Taggart Transcontinental? Galt has told her no middle is possible, and now she sees it. Mr. Thompson asks her if she thinks Galt will ever surrender: “The needle within her wavered for a moment, burning its oscillating way between two courses: should she say that he would not, and see them kill him?—should she say he would, and see them hold onto their power till they destroyed the world? ‘He will,’ she said firmly” (1110). Willers later tells her that Taggart’s transcontinental rail traffic has stopped because trains are being held for ransom in San Francisco; but Dagny will not leave New York.

When the looters decide to parade Galt before the television cameras, and she sees how the faces in the crowd watch Galt with hatred, she understands: “They hate him for being himself—she thought, feeling a touch of cold horror, as the nature of their souls became real to her—they hate him for his capacity to live. Do *they* want to live—she thought in self-mockery. Through the stunned numbness of her mind, she remembered the sound of his sentence: ‘The desire not to be anything, is the desire not to be’” (1124).

Chapter IX: The Generator

John Galt is the generator of life. As the foremost man of the mind, he is the source of all the values, spiritual and material, that lead to life. In this, the climactic chapter of the story, in which Galt serves as the pawn in the demonstration for Dagny, he makes this fact clear for all to see.

The looters had always known, somewhere in the recesses of their minds, hidden by the mental fog they themselves induced, that they depend for their lives on men like Francisco, Wyatt, Dagny, and Hank. But as reward, they always visited tortures upon these men. In the cellar below the State Science Institute, the distilled essence of their policy is revealed. They all know what Mouch screams: “If he dies, we die!” (1142). They hear Galt’s heartbeat, knowing that it is their own as well. Yet they torture Galt nevertheless.

Even in committing this act, however, they must face their utter dependence on the mind. Just as the looters needed Hank to create Rearden Metal so that they could torture him with its confiscation—just as they needed Dagny to create the John Galt Line so that they could torture her with its destruction—just as they needed Francisco to build d’Anconia Copper so they could

torture him with its nationalization—just as they needed Hank’s own sense of justice to torture him with his family’s accusations of injustice—just as they needed Dagny’s own dedication to life to torture her with all the death-dealing obstacles placed in front of her living rails—so they need Galt’s mind in order to torture *him*. Without Galt, the looters cannot create or even fix the generator. When Galt explains to the mechanic how to repair it, even this mindless drone “was able to recognize the nature of the sparkle in the dark green eyes: it was a sparkle of contemptuous mockery” (1144).

The looters had always felt safe evading their policies and their own identities, because some man of the mind would always be there to deflect the consequences and shoulder them himself. Galt, by refusing to bear this burden, makes them see themselves for what they are. Facing the fact that they need Galt even to torture him, and wanting to continue even if it means their deaths, Jim glimpses his own impotence and the motive of his entire life: “he was seeing his face as the face of a killer whom all men should rightfully loathe, who destroyed values for being values, who killed in order not to discover his own irredeemable evil” (1145). Jim collapses, and Ferris and Mouch know that they must never look for the cause, “under peril of sharing the same fate. . . . For the moment, their only certainty was that they had to escape from that cellar—the cellar where the living generator was left tied by the side of the dead one” (1146).

Galt has made Stadler confront this same fact about his own soul. Stadler felt safe in his evasion that people are irrational. Galt, by revealing another form of existence among men, has exploded Stadler’s evasions. “I’ll show *him* that there is no other way to live on earth!” is the wordless thought driving Stadler to the site of Project X. But by destroying the rational—looting men like Francisco and Hank—and sanctioning the irrational—the State Science Institute and Floyd Ferris—what other world did Stadler expect to generate but one ruled by irrationality? This is the terror that Stadler faces, when he discovers that Cuffy Meigs is in charge of Project X, the terror “that he was looking at his final product, that *this* was his spiritual son” (1132). As the two fight over the privilege to rule the mindless, they destroy each other.

But most of all, what Galt makes possible is for Dagny to see the earth as it could and ought to be, as it has always been in her vision of Atlantis. Seeing the looters for what they are, she is free of them and their worship of death, which never had to be taken seriously. She is now ready to strike. “With the greatest effort ever demanded of her”—the Taggart bridge has been cut in half by the explosion at Project X—she gives up Taggart Transcontinental and takes John Galt’s oath (1138).

Chapter X: In the Name of the Best Within Us

Dagny—Eddie Willers heard himself crying soundlessly, as he tried to start the Taggart Transcontinental train—

Dagny, in the name of the best within us! . . . He was jerking at futile levers and at a throttle that had nothing to move. . . . Dagny!—he was crying to a twelve-year-old girl in a sunlit clearing of the woods—in the name of the best within us, I must now start this train! . . . Dagny, *that* is what it was . . . and you knew it, then, but I didn’t . . . you knew it when you turned to look at the rails. . . . I said, ‘not business or earning a living’ . . . but, Dagny, business and earning a living and that in man which makes it possible—*that* is the best within us, *that* was the thing to defend. (1166)

This is what Willers cannot let go of—as he watches people all around him letting go, as he sees the passengers of the Taggart train abandon it to travel by horse and buggy—this, the best within himself, is what no man should let go.

We've come back to the theme as described in the first chapter, but this time with full understanding of that which men have let go of—and with full understanding of the spiritual and moral meaning of “business and earning a living and that in man which makes it possible.”

The only reason man has ascended from cave and foot to skyscrapers and locomotives is that there have been individuals like Dagny, who knew what the best within them was and who never let it go—and now these individuals know the meaning and the glory of that which they had been dedicated to. We hear again Halley's Fifth Concerto, with new understanding.

And it is in the name of their dedication to the best within themselves—and to the man who taught them the glory of it—that Dagny, Hank, Francisco, and Danneskjöld, along with half the male population of the valley, risk their lives to save Galt. It is their last fight against men who want to exist without having to rely on their own minds. ““It had to be me,”” a just-rescued Galt tells Francisco and the three others, ““if they were to try their last, and they've tried and'—he moved his hand, sweeping the room—and the meaning of those who had made it—into the wastelands of the past—‘and that's that’” (1155).

Galt and the strikers have now cleared the path to do what they love—Danneskjöld goes back to reading Aristotle, Francisco to his new smelter designs, Hank to planning another business empire—they have cleared the path to live—they have cleared the path to achieving the best within themselves.