

# Moral Ambition: Perfection and Pride

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- A. From Galt's Speech, *Atlas Shrugged*. Hardcover, 35th anniversary edition, pp.1020-1021

"Pride is the recognition of the fact that you are your own highest value and, like all of man's values, it has to be earned—that of any achievements open to you, the one that makes all others possible is the creation of your own character—that your character, your actions, your desires, your emotions are the products of the premises held by your mind—that as man must produce the physical values he needs to sustain his life, so he must acquire the values of character that make his life worth sustaining—that as man is a being of self-made wealth, so he is a being of self-made soul—that to live requires a sense of self-value, but man, who has no automatic values, has no automatic sense of self-esteem and must earn it by shaping his soul in the image of his moral ideal, in the image of Man, the rational being he is born able to create, but must create by choice—that the first precondition of self-esteem is that radiant selfishness of soul which desires the best in all things, in values of matter and spirit, a soul that seeks above all else to achieve its own moral perfection, valuing nothing higher than itself . . ."

- B. From "The Objectivist Ethics," *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 27, 1964, paperback edition.

On pride: "it means that one must earn the right to hold oneself as one's own highest value by achieving one's own moral perfection—"

- C. From Harry Binswanger, "The Possible Dream," *The Objectivist Forum*, Feb.1981, p. 3

Perfection: "flawlessly complete satisfaction of a standard of value."

- D. From Galt's Speech, *Atlas Shrugged*, p. 1059, emphasis in original

"Man has a single basic choice: to think or not, and that is the gauge of his virtue. Moral perfection is an unbreached rationality—not the degree of your intelligence, but the full and relentless use of your mind, not the extent of your knowledge, but the acceptance of reason as an absolute."

- E. From "The Objectivist Ethics," *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 27

on how to achieve moral perfection:

"by never accepting any code of irrational virtues impossible to practice and by never failing to practice the virtues one knows to be rational—by never accepting an unearned guilt and never earning any, or, if one has earned it, never leaving it uncorrected—by never resigning oneself passively to flaws in one's character ... above all, it means one's rejection of the role of a sacrificial animal, the rejection of any doctrine that preaches self-immolation as a moral virtue or duty."

- F. From "The Cult of Moral Grayness," *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 76

"If, in a complex moral issue, a man struggles to determine what is right, and fails or makes an honest error, he cannot be regarded as 'gray;' morally, he is 'white.' Errors of knowledge are not breaches of morality; no proper moral code can demand infallibility or omniscience."