

# The anthem: mind control



Within the pages of Ayn Rand's novel, *Anthem*, a government which resembles a dictatorship is exhibited. Both the leaders and the society itself seek to control man's body and mind as they follow ideals similar to that of a communist party. The leaders and society in *Anthem* seek to control man's mind using tactics such as collectivism and suppression of the past to accomplish a tyrannical end. The practices of a collective society such as the one in this book disregard all belief in the individual.

By doing this, the society and its leaders brainwash the people into having no personal priority or authority. Everything is done with the betterment of the entire group in mind, no sense of self involvement. Their life is fated in almost every aspect as they cannot even choose their own occupation. " So we waited our turn in the great hall and then we heard the Council of Vocations call our name: ' Equality 7-2521'" described Equality (26). He continued, " the lips of the oldest did not move as they said: ' Street Sweeper'" (26). In taking away all individuality, words such as I and my were also lost.

Equality continuously refers to himself as " we" because " I" does not exist. The use of " we" is so integral to the collective ways of the society that over the portals of the Palace of the World Council, cut in marble it says, " We are one in all and all in one. There are no men but only the great WE, one, indivisible and forever" (19). Not even people are referred to in singular tenses as that expresses individuality. Another thing that truly characterizes a person is their own name. The names in the novel almost resemble our social security numbers today.

They remove all meaning or independence as each name is followed by a number. For example, the number in the name Equality 7-2521 is the number of other Equality's that there have been. By removing all personality which names generally carry, the people become just another number, one in many, never unique. Appearing or being different at all is seen as a horrible thing as Equality says, " Teachers and leaders pointed to and frowned and said ' there is evil in your bones Equality 7-2521, for your body has grown beyond the bodies of your brothers" (18).

Even he felt cursed with his unaccepted appearance, " It is only we, Equality 7-2521, we alone who were born with a curse. For we are not like our brothers" (20). This collectivism and brainwashing which it involves leads to ignorance as people are never given the opportunity to see what they are capable of on their own. In addition to collectivism, making sure that the past remains unmentioned also contributes to the accomplishment of the destruction of mans mind. The times before the Great Rebirth are not to be talked about.

Members of the society are told that the way they are living now is much better, that the past was evil. In reality it is just another element which aids in creating a contoured reality for the citizens of the society. The reader is told that, " It is only the Old Ones who whisper about it in the evenings, in the Home of the Useless. " Its a bit ironic that they are in the Home of the Useless while they know more than the average man about things that were deemed unmentionable.

Rand did that on purpose as it is more false information being fed to the community. The elderly are not actually useless but if they were not put in this home, with a label of unimportance, the secrets of the past would have leaked long ago. Equality continues with more detail, “ They whisper many strange things, of the towers which rose to the sky, in those unmentionable times, and of the wagons which moved without horses, and of lights which burned without flame” (19).

By concealing these stepping stones in urbanization, transportation, and electricity, the government is preventing individual people or small groups from advancing, due to the possibility that everyone else may be left behind. Single people excelling does not follow the laws of collectivism and therefore no one dares to march forward. The hiding of the past along with the use of collectivism forms the basis needed to control mans mind. This novel displays exactly what Ayn Rand’s theory of Objectivism does not support in order to expose the weaknesses of her opponents ways and express the importance of self improvement.

She puts forth for the reader the faults of a collective minded society as the leaders and society within Anthem attempt to control mans body and mind. Towards the close of the novel, as Equality 7-2521 discovers the sacred word he also comes to understand the perks of self improvement and striving to advance as an individual. The leaders and society attempt to accomplish the tyrannical end to their dictatorship through their control of mans body and mind by hiding the past and maintaining a collective society.