

Chained souls: ayn rand's anthem

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In a world dictated by broken bodies and broken minds, the simple task of securing a prison cell could lead to many conflicts.

Is the guard superior to an inmate if he locks the prisoner's cell? Is the prisoner superior to the guard if he escapes? In the civilization of Ayn Rand's novella, *Anthem*, the whole system revolves on equality. Not for one instant is one citizen allowed to be superior to another, nor think a selfish thought for themselves. The prisons, one of the more complex areas of the city, are designed so as never to tilt this perfect balance of equality. Therefore, a balance is struck by creating penetrable cells with ineffective old locks, allowing neither the guard nor the prisoner to be superior to one another. By doing this, the prison system works flawlessly.

Many measures are taken to ensure that prisoners do not escape, but not in the physical ways that we expect, based on our modern-day security. The inmates are so brainwashed that the idea of escaping would never occur to them, and they simply would have no motivation to do so. They also have neither the creativity nor originality to do so. Guards are not necessary because there is no fear of prisoners escaping. Although the prisons seem bizarre and ineffective compared to the high-security ones in the world we know, they are in fact, perfectly effective in Equality 7-2521's land. The whole purpose of The Prison of Collective Detention is to create the illusion of a mental trap.

Not only are the isolated cells meant to be disconcerting to prisoners so used to others' company, but it is also meant to promote a tremendous guilt for not doing their duty, helping their society, and unhesitatingly following

orders. Due to the brainwashing of the citizens in Anthem, escaping or disobeying orders is absolutely inconceivable. Like Equality 7-2521 says, “Men have never defied the council so far as to escape from wherever they are ordered to be,” (Rand 67). Obedience is automatic, like breathing in and breathing out. They do it without thinking. The phrase, “We are nothing.

Mankind is all,” (Rand 21) is so ingrained in their spirits at such a young age that escaping would seem a selfish act. In their hopeless mental states the inmates of the prison feel they deserve their jail time and feel that that is where they belong. Unlike in modern societies, where each person lives for themselves, in Anthem, they feel that by remaining in jail, they are working for the greater good. Another prime reason prisoners don't escape from the prisons is simply motivation. Prisoners have lost all feeling of individual identity and simply set no goals for themselves. They are used to someone else controlling their actions.

Even the more rebellious of the prisoners have nothing that entices them to leave. The inmates, in a bizarre sense, are comfortable in their environments. Unlike in our modern day jails, where prison is much less comfortable than our everyday lives, the prisoners in Anthem face no better future outside than monotonous daily life, and therefore see no reason to escape. There is no freedom inside or out. They have no goal that pushes them to escape, and nothing that urges them to see the outside world. Unlike Equality 7-2521, who was motivated by his creation of electricity, the inmates have no wish to escape and risk being severely punished.

They are fearful of the consequences of escaping and getting put to death, and feel that doing so would simply bring down the society. Unlike in our world, where many inmates have family, loved ones, houses, and friends to meet outside of our cells, the inmates in the Palace of Corrective Detention face no such thing. Although it is difficult for us to comprehend such brainwashing, selflessness, and lack of motivation, in their world, very few can recall ever having personal freedom. Of the many factors that keep inmates in Anthem from escaping, one reason is, they simply lack the imagination. Envision being in Equality's society, where creativity has been squashed since a young age.

After years without an original thought, would you suddenly be able to plan an escape? Probably not. Since the citizens don't think for themselves, they would not value their own lives, or care whether or not they escape from prison. Having never seen anyone rebel against the system before, they simply would not be able to imagine that they are capable of disobeying. Also, since the cells are not locked, nobody expects them to escape, and, in reverse psychology, the concept of escaping simply never enters their minds. For Equality, there is something worth escaping for, which triggers him to overcome his brainwashing and rediscover his own deeply buried creativity and individuality to escape.

For the rest of the world, however, they simply do not have the traits, perseverance, or strength of character to break away from their brainwashed society and disobey. In the mind-numbed communistic society of Anthem, guards are completely unnecessary for patrolling the prisons. Why guard a place where the prisoners don't want to leave? Not only that, as in most <https://assignbuster.com/chained-souls-ayn-rands-anthem/>

communistic societies, the Judges and Guards have no incentive to work harder to ensure that prisoners escape. Doing so would offer no gains to their society, and since they take little pride in their work, they wouldn't dream of doing so. Besides, in their collective society, they are in the mindset that they can't do anything without someone's explicit permission. All of these factors come together to make it clear why the prison has no guards and inadequate locks.

The purpose of the feeble security in the Palace of Corrective Detention is a result of an extreme collective society, lack of individuality, and total mental influencing. In Anthem's world, they don't need physical locks to keep them in, because they've already got chains around their minds and souls that keep them from leaving.