

Anthem Essay

“I worship individuals for their highest possibilities as individuals, and I loathe humanity, for its failure to live up to these possibilities.”-Ayn Rand. In the novel *Anthem* by Ayn Rand, the protagonist Equality 7-2521 lives in a collectivist society and struggles to decide whether he lives for his brothers or for himself. Along that journey, he discovers many things. He determines that having ambition to learn, choosing, and thinking for oneself makes an individual and it is nothing to be ashamed of because it creates happiness and inner peace in oneself.

To begin with, Equality 7-2521 comes to understand that having the will to learn is better than not thinking for oneself. “Two years have passed since we found this place. And in these two years we have learned more than we have learned in ten years in the Home of the Students”(Rand 36). Equality 7-2521 shows the ambition to acquire information if the answers are not given to him. Equality 7-2521 represents the human spirit in everyone by displaying the curiosity to learn. Consequently, this distinguishes him from all of the people in the great “We” because he begins to act for his own best interests, and not for anybody else’s. This is frowned upon in his society because the people are taught to work for the good of mankind by not learning and thinking for themselves.

In addition, Equality 7-2521 discovers that people have to think and choose for themselves. “It is my mind which thinks, and the judgment of my mind is the only searchlight that can find the truth. It is my will which chooses and the choice of my will is the only edict I must respect” (Rand 94). In this quote, Equality 7-2521 comes to the realization that the only choices and thoughts he should respect are his own. He should not respect choices of others that can determine his future, only an individual can control their own destiny. The collectivist society in which he used to live in would not approve of Equality 7-2521’s actions because citizens are made to believe that choices made by the Council of Scholars are the right ones. They are led to think that choices made by an individual for themselves are sinister and evil. Not on any level should that be correct or permitted. A person

Furthermore, Equality 7-2521 learns that being an individual is nothing to be apologetic about. “And yet there is no shame in us and no regret. We say to ourselves that we are a wretch and a traitor. But we feel no burden upon our spirit and no fear in our heart--strange are the ways of evil—in our heart there is the first peace we have known in twenty years.”(Rand 37) This quote represents Equality 7-2521 as a person who does not care about the consequences from living or thinking for himself. Equality 7-2521 is willing to risk his life to live it rather than not living it to the fullest at all. Equality 7-2521 now feels inner peace because he is now starting to live life as an independent individual, not relying on anyone else to make decisions for him. He learns that the Home of Vocations and his brothers cannot determine where he is useful, only he can for himself. Perhaps Equality 7-2521 believes that breaking the laws to learn and study is worth more than possible punishment and repercussion. And as a result, he later says

“But we, Equality 7-2521, are glad to be living. If this is a vice, then we wish no virtue” (Rand 47). This statement is suggesting that he is growing ego and selfishness. He shows he will not be happy to be living because he lives for his brothers, he will be happy because he lives for his own personal purposes.

In the novel *Anthem* by Ayn Rand, the protagonist Equality 7-2521 tries to decide whether he lives for his brothers or for himself. Equality 7-2521 determines that having the ambition to learn, choosing, and thinking for himself is nothing to regret and grows to be peaceful and happier in the process. Going against his brothers or living for his own self creates the reoccurring theme of individualism versus collectivism. And in this novel, it is learned that higher opportunities and possibilities are easier for the individual to accomplish.