

ANTHEM

... no plot ... nor climax

Soos bespreek by Calitzdorp Leeskring deur FREDA PRETORIUS en bygewerk deur ELSA DU PREEZ

Anthem is not a book. It is not a philosophical or government treatise. As Ayn Rand herself admitted, it has neither plot nor real climax! **Anthem** is an outstanding introduction to Ayn Rand's philosophy of human nature. The novella's theme and central conflict – the individual versus the collective – occurs in all her novels and is an important element of her moral and political philosophy.

Rand, as a teenager living in Soviet Russia, initially conceived **Anthem** as a play. After migrating to the United States, she didn't think of writing **Anthem** there, but reconsidered after reading a short story in the *Saturday Evening Post* set in the future: 'It was just an adventure story, but what interested me was the fact that it was the first time I saw a fantasy story in print – rather than the folks-next-door sort of serials. What impressed me was the fact that they would publish such a story. And so I thought that if they didn't mind fantasy, I would like to try **Anthem**.

'I was working on the plot of **The fountainhead** at that time ... I was doing architectural research, but there was no writing I could do yet, and I had to take time off once in a while to write something. So I wrote **Anthem** that summer of 1937.'

Die oorspronklike titel van haar roman was **Ego** en die simboliek daaragter was die waardes van al haar helde, naamlik:

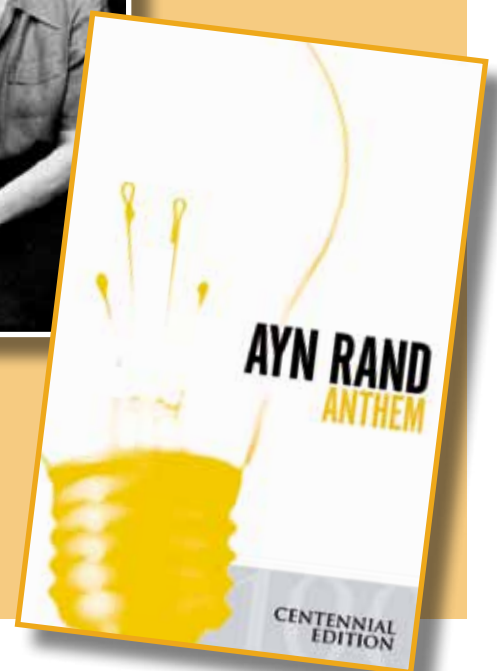
- ▶ rede
- ▶ waardes, eie wilskrag en
- ▶ individualisme.

Sy het die titel later na **Anthem** verander. Die kenmerke van **Anthem** is die volgende:

- ▶ 'n roman in die vorm van 'n dagboek
- ▶ die karakters het nommers, in plaas van name
- ▶ kinders word geskei van hul ouers en deur die Staat grootgemaak
- ▶ individualisme word totaal verwerp ten gunste van gemeenskaplike belang
- ▶ 'n man ontdek sy individualisme deur sy verhouding met 'n vrou
- ▶ 'n woud (die verbode Unchartered Forest) word 'n vrye gebied buite die siek stad (Dystopian City)

- ▶ die hoofkarakter is 'n man wat 'n skakel met die verlede ontdek toe mense nog vry was ... in 'n tunnel onder die aarde wat hy per ongeluk ontdek het.

Ego word in 1938 in Engeland gepubliseer, maar eers in 1946 in die VSA met die titel, **Anthem**. In 1966 word die oorspronklike Engelse uitgawe in die VSA vrygestel, maar dit word nie goed ontvang deur die kritici nie. (Dit moet onthou word dat daar heelwat mense in die VSA was wat kommuniste goedgesind was.)



Opsomming van die storie

Die hoofkarakter, Equality 7-2521, ontdek 'n tunnel onder die grond en begin daarin 'n dagboek hou waarin hy vertel van sy agtergrond en die gemeenskap waarin hy leef. Die regering beheer alles en almal deur middel van die sogenaamde World Council. Die doel is om alle individualistiese idees uit te roei. Só erg is dit dat die woord 'ek' nie gebruik mag word nie en mense altyd die meervoud 'ons' ('we') moet gebruik. Die straf vir gebruik van die 'unspeakable' woord is dood op 'n brandstapel. Kinders word deur die staat versorg tot op vyf jaar in die Home of the Infants en daarna tot op 15 jaar in die Home of the Students. Hier ondervind Equality probleme omdat hy te nuuskierig is, te individualisties, en hy pres- teer te goed in wiskunde en wetenskap. Dit maak hom ongewild by die onderwysers en op 15 word hy deur die Council of Vocations na die Home of the Street Sweepers gestuur. Hy wou dolgraag na die Home of the Scholars gaan, maar is waarskynlik gesien as 'n bedreiging. Hy skryf dat mense gewoonlik ophou werk op 40-jarige ouderdom en dan na die Home of the Useless gaan en dat min mense ouer as 45 jaar word. Ander karakters in die verhaal is International 4-8818 (langer as die gemiddelde) en Union 5-3992, 'half brain' wat 'n epileptieser is. Albei dus ook anders as die gemiddelde. Hulle raak op 'n manier bevriend met mekaar, hoewel persoonlike verhoudings nie toegelaat word nie.

Die tunnel is 'n oorblyfsel van die 'Unmentionable times'. Gedurende die drie ure elke dag wat almal na opvoerings en kore moet luister gaan hy engemerk na die tunnel om te skryf, dinge te ondersoek en later eksperimente te doen. So ontdek hy weer elektrisiteit en die gloeilamp in 'n tyd wat die hele samelewing slegs kerse gebruik.

Hy raak ook bevriend met 'n jong vrou, Liberty 5-3000, wat hy The Golden One noem en soms mee praat wanneer hy die strate vee en niemand hulle sien nie. Liberty noem Equality 'the Unconquered'.

Een aand bly hy te lank in die tunnel en dit word opgelet by die House of the Street Sweepers. Hy weier om te sê waar hy was en word opgesluit in die Palace of Corrective Detention waar hy gemartel word totdat hy ontsnap.

Na sy ontsnapping neem hy sy uitvindsel (elektrisiteit) na die World Council of Scholars wat dit onmiddellik verwerp omdat dit die bestaande balans van hulle wêreld sal bedreig. Wanneer hulle sy uitvindsel wil vernietig, vlug hy daarmee na die Uncharted Forest buite die stad (wat verbode was). Nou is hy vry maar hy moet versigtig wees vir die wilde diere wat daar skuil.

'n Dag later kom hy af op Liberty 5-3000 wat hom agtervolg het. Hulle omhels mekaar maar ken nie die woorde om hul gevoelens vir mekaar uit te druk nie. Hulle vind 'n ou, verweerde huis wat honderde jare oud is en waar daar boeke en klere is wat nog nie vergaan het nie. Hulle ontdek in hierdie boeke dat die 'unspeakable' woord 'I' is. Hulle gee hulleself nuwe name wat hulle in die Griekse mitologie boeke vind. Hy word Prometheus wat beteken 'Titan who stole the fire from Zeus' en sy word genoem Gaea, wat beteken 'Goddess of the earth and mother of the Titans'. Gaea verwag Prometheus se kind. Die kind sal die eerste gebore baba in 'n nuwe samelewing van vrye mense wees. Saam besluit hulle om later vir Union 5-3992 en International 4-8818 te gaan haal en 'n nuwe stad te begin wat die hoofstad van die wêreld sal word.

'The society he founds will make scientific and technological advances because the human mind will not be shackled; it will be free to think, to ask questions, and to explore. He believes that the

world will hear of this free and prosperous society, and that the best individuals from around the globe will flood the roads leading to his city. They will live together in respect of each individual's right to live his or her own life.

'Without a doubt, the most strikingly original feature of the book is its use of language. In the society depicted in the story, the process of collectivisation has been completed at a level far deeper than the political. The society has successfully brainwashed its citizens to believe that only toil for others is good, and that they should exist utterly bereft of a personal life. The collective masters have also succeeded in radically altering the thought patterns of its citizens. Leaders have obliterated all concepts of individuality from human minds.

'The story is a depiction of a collectivised society as regressing into scientific, technological, and industrial collapse. In **Anthem**, Ayn Rand portrays a dark age of the future. Her mission of a collectivised society stands in sharp contrast to that of George Orwell as presented in his novel, **1984**. In **1984** the sciences can control people's minds. **Anthem** shows that a prohibition of freedom results in a decline into primitive subsistence. Her theory is that progress is a product of an independent mind.

'Furthermore we must understand that the characters depicted – both those who think and those who unquestioningly obey – have a free will, that is, they can make choices. It is clearest in the heroic characters. Equality 7-2521 has a choice to go into the ancient subway tunnel or not, to report it or not, to steal away and study science or not, to flee into the Uncharted Forest or accept his fate, and so on. International 4-8818 also has a choice to report Equality 7-2521's actions or stand by his friend. The Golden One (Liberty 5-3000) has a choice to follow her heart or the dictates of society, which prohibited her from speaking to Equality 7-2521.

The more passive characters also make choices: mindless obedience is not forced on them.

'Students often think the citizens of **Anthem** are puppets brainwashed and controlled by the State. This is not so. They retain their capacity to think and to choose. Equality 7-2521's plan at the end depends on his free will – for when he created a different kind of society. He fully expects the best of human kind to recognise the merit of it and flock to its banner: They will choose freedom over tyranny. The mind may be dormant, but never extinct, no dictatorship can kill the human capacity to choose liberty.'

Aldus Ayn Rand ...

Other books by Ayn Rand

Atlas shrugged.- Random House, 1957.

The fountainhead.- New American, 1971.

We the living.- Random House, 1959.

For the new intellectual.- New American, 1961.

***Philosophy: who needs it?-** Bobbs-Merrill, 1982.

Bronne

Cliff's notes

Wikipedia Internet

Note: *Title not in stock