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## Unravel of the Hidden: A Posthumanist Reflection of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper explores George Orwell's novella by the title *Animal Farm*, first published in 1945, through a posthumanist lens, examining the deeper, multifaceted insights this work offers beyond its meaning at the surface level. While this work is widely regarded and believed to be a satirical allegory critiquing the Russian Revolution and Stalin's totalitarian rule, it also seems to reveal various underlying truths regarding the human conditions, making it open to rich and diverse interpretations—one such being posthumanism and its concerns. As members of the human society and active participants within it, we share a common responsibility to maintain harmony between humanity and its surroundings, a theme that resonates with the posthuman ideologies and the elements of which could be seen embedded within this text also. This study will analyze how *Animal Farm* embodies and reflects various posthuman concerns, thus demonstrating its relevance within this framework and tradition.

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To define and to define again and to define endlessly; a perpetual process after which the humankind has always been indulged with. Everything that's around his existence, including his own, is under this subjection where they cannot escape from this process of defining as they are in search of finding out the meaning behind everything and for that definitions are paramount. In this never-ending quest to find the meaning behind everything, to accord all those existences in this world with definitions to explicate



them granted language the power and authority to reflect the world as it is. Indeed, it was through the language that everything has been defined, so as to reflect what post-structuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida has suggested as there is nothing that resides outside the text. Whenever we are trying to understand and define reality- that is, the world around us- we are doing it through the language which is a system of signs and symbols. In other words, our perceptions of this reality is accomplished through the concepts and representations structured by language itself.

In such a world where reality is constructed and interpreted through the medium of language, where everything is brought under the confines of definitions, the role of ideologies and beliefs in both leading and misleading the humankind is extensive and boundless. But for them to remain unchangeable and unmarred is uncertain, as such is the nature of this earthly life where all kinds of existences are susceptible to changes and impermanence. One such long held belief was the supremacy of the humans over every other existences in our nature, which was strongly and blindly believed to be the ultimate truth that will prevail throughout the human history, but underwent severe transformations culminating to have lost its relevance in the ages that followed. Mankind's failure in understanding their actual role and significance, thus hiding their likeness with every other existences only as coexisting entities, where he placed himself over the top of every other creations and crowned himself with ascendancy over every other entities and the impacts that followed it ensued the later developments of what we called 'Posthumanism', an intellectual movement which challenged the human centered perspectives and fostered the interconnectedness of every existences within the broader framework of nature.

To move further deep into our topic under discussion, we primarily need to know more precisely what Posthumanism is and what its roles in our day-to-day lives are. Like what we have discussed so far, Posthumanism is a set of ideas which questions the basic considerations regarding the humans as the central agents to the moral world; it persists in arguing and protesting against the act of giving hegemony and placing humans at the top of everything- over every other existence. The tradition before posthumanism known to be Humanism- "... a term that captures a broad range of philosophical and ethical movements that are unified by their unshakable belief in the unique value, agency and moral supremacy of human beings" (Pirie-Griffiths, 2021) - was a reaction emerged during the Renaissance period which was aimed against the religious authoritarianism and superstition of the Medieval Europe. Posthumanism on the other hand reacted against this teachings of Humanism by opposing and rejecting some humanist considerations as described below:



... the human being occupies a natural and eternal place at the very center of things, where it is distinguished absolutely from machines, animals, and other inhuman entities; where it shares with all other human beings a unique essence; where it is the origin of meaning and the sovereign subject of history; and where it behaves and believes according to something called 'human nature'. (Pirie-Griffiths, 2021)

It stood for what was contrastive to the conceptions and teachings of Humanism. It held the realization that are mentioned in brief as follows:

... 'Man' is not the privileged and protected center, because humans are no longer – and perhaps never were – utterly distinct from animals, machines, and other forms of the 'inhuman'; are the products of historical and cultural differences that invalidate any appeal to a universal, transhistorical human essence; are constituted as subjects by a linguistic system that pre-exists and transcends them; and are unable to direct the course of world history towards a uniquely human goal. (Mambrol, 2019)

Literature, one such endeavor of humankind aimed at defining and enriching it, has also reflected many of these experiences – both humanist and posthumanist affairs- out of which our aim will be to look after the representations of posthuman considerations reflected in the literary work *Animal Farm* written by George Orwell, first published in 1945. As we all know, language having the ability to hide innumerable meanings and interpretations underneath what it represents, so do literature having the faculty to reflect countless reflections from the very same text it represents. Even when this novella is believed to have written primarily as a satirical allegory to criticize the Russian Revolution and the subsequent rise of Stalin's totalitarian regime, thus warning against the dangers of power, corruption, and the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, it can also be read in relation with various other experiences aligned with human lives; one such being the posthuman interpretation of this masterpiece. Thus, our dealings hereafter will be to answer the question: How *Animal Farm* qualifies to be regarded as a work of posthumanist representation?

When a sudden glimpse into the work being made: Mr. Jones of the Manor Farm is so lethargic and drunk that he forgot to feed his livestock one day. The events that followed ensued in a rebellion, led under the leadership of two pigs Napoleon and Snowball, where the animals took control of the farm from its human masters. The renamed Animal Farm is later organized to benefit all those animals that lived within the premises of the farm, eliminating all kinds of inequities that existed before. But, with



the passing of time, the ideals of the rebellion gets corrupted and later forgotten. Napoleon and the pigs become increasingly oppressive where they enjoyed greater privileges while the rest of the animals travailed under worsening conditions. The pigs started to appear and function in the same way as their former masters did. The novella ends with the animals peeking into the farmhouse, where the pigs are dining with humans whom they have overthrown, and realizing that they can no longer tell the difference between the two. Our focus will be after the reflections within this work which articulate the posthuman ideals and concerns.

Of the infinite number of literary works that dealt with posthuman tradition, *Animal Farm* can also be considered a prominent one of such nature because of its richness in mirroring posthumanist elements. Each and every single page of this work contains within it immense number of elements that falls under such a tradition. The beginning sections of the work itself is a profound detailing and testament of such an ideal where the authority of humans is being questioned. In such a world where the humans were believed and taught to be the ones worthy enough to uphold the supreme position amongst all the existences, this novella holds its unique position in qualifying the animals with the will to speak and act, socially and politically, like humans do. Through such an attempt that eliminated the difference between the way by which humans and animals functioned, the blurring of the boundaries and discriminations laid upon these species belonging to the animal kingdom by man himself could be seen established here. Man's unwavering condescendence installed over every other existences without any questions is seen to have disturbed here as such an authority that they believed to possess within their control is directly or indirectly questioned through such a reflection in the early sections of this work:

As soon as the light in the bedroom went out there was a stirring and a fluttering all through the farm buildings. Word had gone round during the day that old Major, the prize Middle White boar, had had a strange dream on the previous night and wished to communicate it to the other animals. It had been agreed that they should all meet in the big barn as soon as Mr. Jones was safely out of the way. Old Major ... was so highly regarded on the farm that everyone was quite ready to lose an hour's sleep in order to hear what he had to say. (Orwell, 2011, p. 1)

The initial sections of the work itself has revealed the posthuman inclination of this work where the dominance of humans is brought under scrutiny, as a world of animal dominance is also shown alongside the human world. All the animals in the farm were in a preparation to attend a meeting hosted by old Major, a pig, who wanted to share his dream which he saw in the previous night and to gather all



others to fight against the supremacy of humans, especially that of their masters. It could be observed that every aspect of human nature is imparted with these animals also, which can be read- directly and indirectly- as an attempt that challenged the long-held tradition of human paramountcy.

Most of the traits of human nature can be seen reflected in these animals alike throughout this work:

Benjamin was the oldest animal on the farm, and the worst tempered. He seldom talked, and when he did, it was usually to make some cynical remark- for instance, he would say that God had given him a tail to keep the flies off, but that he would sooner have had no tail and no flies. Alone among the animals on the farm he never laughed. If asked why, he would say that he saw nothing to laugh at. Nevertheless, without openly admitting it, he was devoted to Boxer; the two of them usually spent their Sundays together in the small paddock beyond the orchard, grazing side by side and never speaking. (Orwell, 2011, p. 2)

In such a place where the humans were considered to be the significant ones and everything else to be their subjects and inferior in the order of creation, the ability of these animals to live and function in the same manner as the humans do is itself a posthuman attempt of referring and calling towards the establishment of equal significance and harmony that should have existed between humans and animals, as they being the parts and participants of the same natural world.

Why posthumanism? Indeed a remarkable question to which historical evidences points out many answers to its evolution, out of which its advocacy for a non-anthropocentric view, recognizing the interconnectedness of humans, animals, and the environment will be our focal point. The Anthropocene era that highlighted human destruction of the planet due to their misconsiderations of themselves as the centric figures in the creation chain culminated in teachings leading to a shift away from human-centered thinking. In order to make their living more appropriate and satisfactory, what the humans did was to manipulate their own surroundings and everything within it. The way they exploited everything around them is beyond expressing, since what mattered them the most was themselves, and they weren't even bothered about the repercussions that might have resulted by such an act. The clear picture of the ways in which the animals suffered out of it can be heard in Major's voice:

'Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever.



‘... he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself. Our labour tills the soil, our dung fertilises it, and yet there is not one of us that owns more than his bare skin. You cows that I see before me, how many thousands of gallons of milk have you given during this last year? And what has happened to that milk which should have been breeding up sturdy calves? Every drop of it has gone down the throats of our enemies. And you hens, how many eggs have you laid in this last year, and how many of those eggs ever hatched into chickens? The rest have all gone to market to bring in money for Jones and his men. And you, Clover, where are those four foals you bore, who should have been the support and pleasure of your old age? Each was sold at a year old - you will never see one of them again. In return for your four confinements and all your labour in the fields, what have you ever had except your bare rations and a stall?

‘And even the miserable lives we lead are not allowed to reach their natural span. ... no animal escapes the cruel knife in the end. You young porkers who are sitting in front of me, every one of you will scream your lives out at the block within a year. To that horror we all must come - cows, pigs, hens, sheep, everyone. Even the horses and the dogs have no better fate. You, Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power, Jones will sell you to the knacker, who will cut your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds. As for the dogs, when they grow old and toothless, Jones ties a brick round their necks and drowns them in the nearest pond. (Orwell, 2011, pp. 4-5)

The voice of selfishness behind human motives could be heard in these words. Indeed, there has been nothing more stimulating than this aspect and drive for selfishness that made them pursue such methods of discrimination and destruction upon the lives of organisms and things that coexist with him. Being distinguishable from every other creature on the basis of their intellectuality naturally, and using the same excuse to discriminate everything else and to plant their dominance upon all of them, what they did in real was to create a life for themselves that was highly satisfiable even without considering the aftermaths associated with it- a clear depiction of how cruel humans are for their own benefits. The need and urgency to eliminate such a human centric tendency could be seen reflected through many of similar representations included within this novella.



Where the men only cared for their supremacy and satisfaction, the animals within this story never wanted to be exactly like humans, rather their vision was to build an independent circumstance for them which will be safer from the evil clutches of men, as can be heard from Major's voice:

' ... remember always your duty of enmity towards Man and all his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him. Even when you have conquered him, do not adopt his vices. No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money, or engage in trade. All the habits of Man are evil. And, above all, no animal must ever tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal. (Orwell, 2011, p. 6)

Even when claiming ourselves to be the most prudent and sensible beings in the entire order of creation, how unworthy and undeserving we are to qualify such a stand is shown in these lines. The portrayal of animals in deciding not to become exactly like the humans, their resolve to not resemble their kind with humankind, marks this iniquity of the human existence. It calls for an attempt to reconsider the ways by which we are living. The immediacy of the posthuman concerns in tearing and shedding away such a wicked role that we are holding on the basis of our long held misconceptions is reflected here.

With the death of old Major three days later, the authority of rebellion gets rested upon three other pigs: Snowball, Napoleon and Squealer. The hardships of the animals in the farm when became intolerable, the resistance ensued:

The men had milked the cows in the early morning and then had gone out rabbiting, without bothering to feed the animals. When Mr. Jones got back he immediately went to sleep on the drawing-room sofa with the News of the World over his face, so that when evening came, the animals were still unfed. At last they could stand it no longer. One of the cows broke in the door of the store-shed with her horn and all the animals began to help themselves from the bins. It was just then that Mr. Jones woke up. The next moment he and his four men were in the store-shed with whips in their hands, lashing out in all directions. This was more than the hungry animals could bear. With one accord, though nothing of the kind had been planned beforehand, they flung themselves upon their tormentors. Jones and his men suddenly found themselves being





butted and kicked from all sides. The situation was quite out of their control. They had never seen animals behave like this before, and this sudden uprising of creatures whom they were used to thrashing and maltreating just as they chose, frightened them almost out of their wits. After only a moment or two they gave up trying to defend themselves and took to their heels. A minute later all five of them were in full flight down the cart-track that led to the main road, with the animals pursuing them in triumph.

... the animals had chased Jones and his men out on to the road and slammed the five-barred gate behind them. And so, almost before they knew what was happening, the Rebellion had been successfully carried through: Jones was expelled, and the Manor Farm was theirs. (Orwell, 2011, pp. 11-12)

At last, the animals succeed in their attempt to raise their voice against the inequalities and sufferings to which they were reduced. The animals who once were the slaves of humans became their own masters. The wall set between them to distinguish was crumbled then. The attitude of condescendence that man upheld was shredded into pieces. There began the dawn of the kingdom of animals. There aroused the principles and sentiments of “Animalism” where it overpowered the highly held Humanism until then. The beliefs, teachings, doctrines, ideologies that man is the center being displaced here; a direct reflection of the posthuman attempts which were evolved to rethink humanity’s place in the world, embracing a more interconnected and coexisting future with everything while challenging traditional humanist ideals.

In the story, the animals weren’t ready to tolerate the remnants of their early masters that brought torment and misery upon their lives. The oppressed started to free themselves of the haunting memories of their oppressive owners:

Their first act was to gallop in a body right round the boundaries of the farm, as though to make quite sure that no human being was hiding anywhere upon it; then they raced back to the farm buildings to wipe out the last traces of Jones’s hated reign. The harness-room at the end of the stables was broken open; the bits, the nose-rings, the dog-chains, the cruel knives with which Mr. Jones had been used to castrate the pigs and lambs, were all flung down the well. The reins, the halters, the blinkers, the degrading nosebags, were thrown on to the rubbish fire which was burning in the yard. So were the whips. All the animals capered with joy when they saw the





whips going up in flames. Snowball also threw on to the fire the ribbons with which the horses' manes and tails had usually been decorated on market days. (Orwell, 2011, pp. 12-13)

All that which belonged to their human masters were annihilated completely. The traces of any links that retained connections to the past experiences were eliminated as soon as they were liberated. Such an act could be seen as the very way by which posthuman tradition is also working, where what they calls for is the immediate shedding of the systems that existed before, which is the human centric ideologies and acts associated with it. Posthumanism advocates for ethical, technological, and ecological changes that reflect a more interconnected, coordinated and inclusive worldview where it strives to create and ensures a world in which intelligence, agency, and rights are not limited to humans alone, but is applicable to all. The ensuring of such can only be accomplished by removing the remnants of the long held misconceptions and misteachings, an act which could be seen reflected in the way by which these animals are doing.

Their deed never ended there with their liberation. The animals did everything under their power to ensure a harmonious life ensued there. All they wanted was to not live the way they used to live earlier.

The animals had destroyed everything that reminded them of Mr. Jones. Napoleon then led them back to the store-shed and served out a double ration of corn to everybody, with two biscuits for each dog. Then they sang 'Beasts of England' from end to end seven times running. (Orwell, 2011, p. 13)

Their acts were nothing less than selflessness. They cared for each other. Everything that were denied to them, by their previous masters, were given till they became satisfied. Everyone was provided with things that were appropriate for them in satisfiable amounts. Making it certain that no any mistakes of the previous life be repeated again and providing new opportunities where a concord is guaranteed amongst all the dwellers of the farm, the animals maintained a balanced and equitable living where happiness and satisfaction was the effect that flowed out of it. The same could be said about the functionality of the posthumanists where all they wanted is to ensure this harmonious balance to persist among every existences within this natural world; the early misapprehensions by which the human society has functioned being criticized and questioned, the aftermath of which being the ensurance of such faulty practices be eradicated and methods of reestablishing the equilibrium being imposed between every existences.



Not only did the animals were shown to possess great thinking capabilities like the humans do, but were also revealed to have great reasoning and logic which could be read in the episode where they are spreading the news of rebellion and invasion of the farm from their human masters to others:

By the late summer the news of what had happened on Animal Farm had spread across half the county. Every day Snowball and Napoleon sent out flights of pigeons whose instructions were to mingle with the animals on neighbouring farms, tell them the story of the Rebellion, and teach them the tune of ‘Beasts of England’. (Orwell, 2011, p. 24)

Jones and all his men, with half a dozen others from Foxwood and Pinchfield, had entered the five-barred gate and were coming up the cart-track that led to the farm. They were all carrying sticks, except Jones, who was marching ahead with a gun in his hands. Obviously they were going to attempt the recapture of the farm.

This had long been expected, and all preparations had been made. Snowball, who had studied an old book of Julius Caesar’s campaigns which he had found in the farmhouse, was in charge of the defensive operations. He gave his orders quickly, and in a couple of minutes every animal was at his post. (p. 26)

For the masters to attempt a recapture of their property from the animals is very likely to occur and the animals, who being conscious and aware about it, are cautious in making sure that the defenses are well established and guaranteed. Any failure in the fortifications that they have built against the intruders – humans- will lead to their gradual downfall and to retreat into the early life in which they suffered a lot, but the severity will be greater this time. The posthumanist concerns could be read from this instance also; like the animals in this story, those people who supports and advocates for the breeding and practice of posthuman tradition is also after the process of strict monitoring and observation to ensure that the teachings that they have spread and the freedom that they have won against the early humanist or human centric ideologies aren’t capitulated and relinquished. For such a thing to happen means the doom of mankind forever. Thus the relevance of nurturing and maintaining posthuman convictions for the better prosperity of the natural world could be seen articulated here in this situation taken form this work.

To conclude our discussion, from what all have been examined and mentioned so far, it could undoubtedly be claimed that Orwell’s *Animal Farm* qualifies to be referred as a work within which



various posthuman elements and concerns are embedded and reflected. With its richness in representations which blurred the boundaries between animals and humans where animals are characterized to have the similar traits that humans only possess, that which has shown the negative impacts associated with such human centric undertakings, that which reflected the selfishness and brutality behind the hierarchical distinctions, that which articulated about the animal's consciousness regarding the urgency to take actions in order to liberate them from the tribulations forced upon them, that which mirrored their strivings even after they have been liberated, this literary masterpiece succeeded in enriching itself with the aspects of posthuman tradition despite its initial purpose of writing where it spoke about something else from its surface level. The events and instances within the story shed light onto the need and immediacy to follow the posthuman culture that which eradicated all the follies of the faulty doctrines that belonged to the early ages, which in turn fostered the challenging of traditional human-centered perspectives by rethinking the boundaries between humans, animals, technology, and the environment, thus emphasizing the interconnectedness and the fluidity of identity towards building a better future where balance and harmony prevails forever.

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