

**George Orwell's Political Theory
as Reflected in Animal Farm**

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Introduction

It is generally known that politics is an important theme of George Orwell's (1903-1950). His literary writing is influenced by different political and social changes of his time. As a political thinker, his novels reveal political and social problems that caused the social and political upheavals of his time. He seeks for a political theory that may enrich the society with ideal thoughts. This research aims at showing the political theory as reflected in Animal Farm. It is divided into three sections. Section one illustrates Animal Farm as a novel. Section two shows Animal Farm as a political allegory and section three explains the political views found in Animal Farm. Finally a conclusion that sums up the findings of this research.

Orwell published an essay in 1947 called "Why I Write", in which he states his aims and convictions as a writer.

Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism.... And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity.

What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, "I am going to produce a work of art". I write it because there is some lie I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. But I could not do the work of writing a book, or even a long magazine article, if it were not also an aesthetic experience (Quoted in Calder, 21).

Orwell is considered "the conscience of his generation" (Karl, 148), for he sacrificed his art to history and journalism. He tried to make political writing as an art. Orwell lived through "one of the most chaotic periods in history, and he saw radical changes occurring in the world, unprecedented ones, but he

chose to retain hard-gained truths and human dignity" (Ibid, 165).

1- Animal Farm as a Novel.

Orwell claims that Animal Farm (1945) is "the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole" (Quoted in Crick, 450). Orwell insisted that the events and developments of the 1930s and 1940s demanded a political response and a continuing debate in which both Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four (1949), played a major role in the validity of political fiction.

Orwell's early struggle as a writer in the political, social climate, and the rise of Fascism in Europe was a disturbing shadow. For any thinker had to take sides, and his feelings had to find their way not only into his writing but into his judgments on literature. Literature had to become political because anything else would have entailed mental dishonesty (Woodcock, 76).

Orwell was a member of the Independent Labour Party, and "his sense of political engagement was crucial in his development as a writer" (Calder, 20). The crucial experiences for Orwell in the Spanish Civil War are "comradeship and respect", everyone treats the others as equal. Orwell explained

the origins and political purpose of Animal Farm in a preface he wrote in 1947 for a Ukrainian edition.

... for the past ten years I have been convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the socialist movement.

On my return from Spain I thought of exposing the Soviet myth in a story that could be easily understood by almost anyone and which could be easily translated into other languages. However the actual details of the story did not come to me for some time until one day (I was then living in a small village) I saw a little boy, perhaps ten years old, driving a huge cart-horse along a narrow path whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them, and that man exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat.

I proceeded to analyse Marx's theory from the animals' point of view... (Quoted in Crick, 450-451).

Orwell presents his political thoughts in Animal Farm, for it is a powerful hit against Russian policies and the Russian revolution. He is interested in the political aspects of human life, the way societies are formed, functioned, and how people act as a group. Animal Farm is considered "the finest political parable

of our time" (Calder, 17). Salami believes that Animal Farm deals with "crucial political phenomenon of our time" (11). Orwell succeeded as a polemicist and pamphleteer, for his:

Experimentation with the literary techniques that could most forcefully convey his ideas is characteristic of all Orwell's non-fiction: autobiographical, sociological, and political (Meyers,130).

2- Animal Farm as a Political Allegory

Orwell wrote Animal Farm during the Second World War, when Stalin, the Soviet leader, was an ally of Britain and the United States. Stalin was highly praised for he was seen to embody the Russian's heroic resistance to German Nazism, besides glossing over aspects of his leadership which was the objects of criticism. Orwell as an honest man believed that it was morally and politically wrong to see Stalin as admirable. He explains briefly through Animal Farm, the general attitude of the rulers after any revolution, and also the historical facts of Stalin's era (Calder, 16).

Stalin influenced the common masses of Russia with his hypocritical tyranny. He was a dictator who seldom paid any attention to the problems of common men of Russia. As a political thinker, Orwell attacks the dictatorship of Stalin

through Animal Farm. He believes that equality at the economic level among people was not possible under communism.

Orwell believed that the Russian revolution was based on high ideals. He opposed totalitarianism. Totalitarianism stands for that society which is ruled by a dictator or a group of dictators. All human liberties and rights are taken away. Fascism, communism, and socialism in its worst form are the examples of totalitarianism. Thus, totalitarian state owes no-justice to the society. He hated the society which is dominated by totalitarianism. He was preoccupied with the evils of imperialism, progeny, poverty, and social injustice (Brander, 19).

After the revolution, the leaders could not put the theories of communism into practice. They did not pay attention to the development of common man. Orwell laments the death of those ideals which were the supporting base of Russian revolution through Animal Farm. He shows many incidents that symbolize the tyranny of Stalin for example, the windmill project, the killing of the ducks, hens, and also the death of Boxer. He also shows three battles that take place on animal farm, the first battle between Jones and the animals. The second is the Battle of Cowshed, when Jones attacks the animal farm. Finally, the battle between Fredrick and the animals, that ruins the windmill (Calder, 26).

Marx, a socialist thinkers of the nineteenth century, believed that "the exploitation of man by man" (Salami, 4), must be ended and a classless society should be established so that all people would be equal. He insisted on a revolution of the exploited (the proletariat) against exploiters (the bourgeoisie), in order to enable the farmers to own the means of production, like factories and machinery. Meanwhile "this revolution would set up a "dictatorship of the proletariat" to do away with the old bourgeois order (the capitalist system) and eventually replace it with a classes society" (Ibid).

Orwell portrays the happenings of the Russian revolution on a farm based during the beginnings of the Industrial revolution. The animals, unhappy with their day to day living conditions, rise and revolt against the tyrant Jones, the cruel and drunkard owner of the Manor farm. Richard Rees states that:

The struggle of the farm animals, having driven out their human exploiter, to create a free and equal community takes the form of a most ingeniously worked-out recapitulation of the history of Soviet Russia from 1917 up to the Tehran conference. (84)

The characters of Animal Farm represent important characters or types of people in the Russian revolution, for the animals "are used to illustrate aspects of human behaviour" (Calder, 6). Orwell's chief characters exist only as social animals

and he is "less interested in man than he is in the society that has infected him" (Karl,153).

Napoleon represents Joseph Stalin, a cruel leader during and after the revolution, who exiled other political leaders and forced mass-executions upon the people, which is the same way Napoleon does in Animal Farm. Napoleon is "a large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar, ..., not much of a talker, but with a reputation for getting his own way" (Animal Farm, 15). He always ends his speech with: "Long Live Animal Farm!" (Ibid, 57).

Snowball, the opposing pig and leader of the farm to Napoleon. He studies military history, leads the Battle of Cowshed (the Civil war), he organizes the army commands to win the battle. He is "a more vivacious pig than Napoleon, quicker in speech and more inventive, but was not considered to have the same depth of character" (Ibid, 15). He seemed a strong and just leader, till; Napoleon expelled him from the farm and set-off rumors about Napoleons false attempt to destroy the civilization they had worked to build after the revolution. There is a close link between Snowball and the Soviet expatriate Leon Trotsky, who was expelled from Russia under the leadership of Stalin (Hollis, 53).

Major, represents Marx-Lenin of the Russian revolution. He is a wise pig that passed away three days after he unveiled

his plan for a new and better life on the farm. He created the idea of communism, or animalism in animal farm. He tells the animals that: "our lives are miserable, laborious, and short" (Animal Farm, 8).

Pilkington and Frederick, the human owners in the neighbouring farms, they represent various world leaders during the time of the revolution, and the occurrences that happened between them and Russia, or between animal farm and the other farms.

Boxer, a strong dedicated horse of animal farm. He represents all the people of Russia, the poverty stricken, the homeless, who still work hard in order to make the system of communism or animalism work. He is also a representation of the workers who are pushed around, who are taken for all they are worth, and who are left for death. He is later sold to the knackers because he can no longer work hard. He always repeats that "I will work harder", and "Napoleon is always right" (Ibid,55).

There are also other characters like Mollie, who stands for the white Russians meaning folly, "and her retrogressive defection for vanity and luxury is a paradigm of the entire revolution" (Meyers, 139). There is also Moses, Clover, Squealer, Whymper, Benjamin,... etc.

In animal farm which was called Manor Farm at the beginning, Old Major tells the animals how they are exploited at the hands of Jones. He tells the animals that: "All men are enemies. All animals are comrades" and that "we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal" (Ibid,12). After his death, the revolution starts when the animals expel Jones from the farm. Napoleon and Snowball become leaders of the farm and the farm is called Animal Farm. The place where the meetings take place is the barn, it is also a place of shelter for all the animals, except for the pigs, in which the schoolhouse is their place. The schoolhouse is also a place where the pigs learn to read and write in order to grow in social power over the less-intelligent animals that spent their days working in order to bring enough food to keep the revolution alive. The seven commandments are written on the wall in great white letters. They are:

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal. (Ibid,23)

Snowball is expelled by the dogs of Napoleon and Napoleon becomes the leader who seldom cares for the other animals. He tries to prove that Snowball has been a secret agent of Jones. Orwell wants to show that there "always will be pigs in every society, ..., and they will always grab power" (Greenblatt, in Williams,111). The cruel fact is that everyone in society, willingly, or unwillingly contributes to the pigs tyranny.

The animals later built a windmill which proved to be an important icon and struggle, because it was destroyed twice, and "all the year the animals worked like slaves "(Animal Farm, 53). The pigs who are in charge of the farm do less work than the other animals and they receive more food. "Once again all the rations were reduced, except those of the pigs and the dogs" (Ibid,95). This shows how the farm is full of inequality. Finally, Napoleon becomes a corrupt leader whose chief aim is to become a dictator. "The remainder of Animal Farm is a chronicle of the consolidation of Napoleon's power through clever politics, propaganda, and terror" (Greenblatt, in Williams, 109). Napoleon is referred to as "our leader, Comrade Napoleon" (Animal Farm, 79), and they sing him a poem entitled "Comrade Napoleon" (ibid, 80).

3- Political Ideas in Animal Farm

Orwell hated, inequality, from which came a desire for a society in which class privileges would not exist. This was to him "democratic socialism". He also hated political lying in which "his hatred of political lying and his support for socialism led him to denounce the political lie that what was going on in the Soviet Union had anything to do with socialism" (Salami, 1).

In Animal Farm, Orwell tries to show the relationship between the leaders and the led. For, he believes that once a group or an individual obtains power, it is impossible to manage it correctly. Orwell wants to stop this type of governing. The leader should be given less power, so that the leader and his followers are equal. There will always be a leader and there will always be followers, and they will never be equal. A society in which all are equal will never exist because people will have different opinions on the way that the society should be run. The leader will always take advantage of his power. Power causes the leader to make decisions that will only better him. Orwell echoes the famous statement of Lord Acton: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Quoted in Crick, 462).

The pigs abused their power to the full extent, they are selfish and greedy. Their behaviour is wrong. The pigs changed their rules to better themselves, they abuse their power totally. A cruel government will never last long because a rebellion occurs. Rebellions are often sparked by music, because it inspires those that are being oppressed to rise up and overthrow their dictators. The pigs banned their favorite song "Beasts of England" (Animal Farm, 12), because it promotes rebellion and composed another song which began: "Animal Farm, Animal Farm,

Never through me shalt thou come to harm!" (ibid, 77).

Orwell wants leaders to do what is best for the whole, and not to take advantage of the masses. The downfall of a fair and just society is gullibility. The greed and treachery of pigs and humans are depicted directly. Orwell wants people to think of themselves and to question whatever is forced upon them. They must have faith and belief in their own ideas and work together as a whole. The cause of an oppressed society is the lack of belief of one's own ideas. It is the animals' stupidity that allows pigs to take advantage of them. The animals believed in every explanation that Squealer gave, no

matter how unrealistic. Even the commandments of animalism are prevented, till the only thing left is:

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL
BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL
THAN OTHERS (Ibid, 114).

Orwell wants to convey a message to the society that socialism is the only way through which progress can be brought about. Political awareness is the utmost need of mankind.

People should know that they have the right to enjoy freedom. He dreams of a society in which all human beings are free from every type of exploitation.

Orwell shows through Napoleon's tyrannical policies that power corrupts the ruler. At the end of the novel, he shows that the pigs (communists) and the human beings (capitalists) have become one, regarding their policies and ways of life.

Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again, but already it was impossible to say which was which (Ibid,120).

Conclusion

Orwell wants people to think of themselves and have faith in their beliefs. People will never be completely equal but at least they will not be oppressed. Orwell records the history of the Russian revolution, and he illustrates the political aspects through Animal Farm. As a great political thinker, he observes the political scenes of the world. He gives us his ideas about the shortcomings of communism, and at the same time he gives a message to mankind.

The main message in Animal Farm is that power cannot be distributed equally. There will never be equality for all. Equality does not exist, for it is impossible for everyone to be equal. Animal Farm describes how a society's ideologies can be manipulated and twisted by individuals in positions of social and political power. Socialism is also important for the societies progress. Animal Farm is a successful novel, for it shows historical events and personalities of Russia. It lets us know about every revolution that is brought for freedom besides telling us the results of the Soviet revolution. Orwell emphasizes the fact that human beings are in need of political awareness.

At the end of Animal Farm, the place is much worse for the common animals than it had been to the revolution. Everything about the conditions of life is bad, the food is scarce, the leadership is harsh and unruly, the world-load is hard. The

pigs, the leaders of animal farm celebrate their victory and their entrance into high-society, while the other animals are still left on the farm look on.

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