

“All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others”

“Animal Farm” is a gripping allegorical novella authored by Englishman George Orwell, as well as a personal favorite in the political genre. Written in 1944, amidst a harrowing World War against the Axis Powers, the book deals with the rise of Communism in Eastern Europe, presented as a sort of “fairy tale”. This is particularly interesting. Orwell makes use of anthropomorphic animals to convey character traits of important figures and bodies in the USSR, weaving an intricate tale to rival those of Anderson. (very well expressed – you tone is upbeat from the outset, well done!)

Although, it is important to bear in mind that this is not in any way a work of political propaganda. In contrast, Orwell ridicules the state of the Soviet Union, a British ally. However, that is not to say that the ideas and themes discussed are not applicable to the general progression of revolutions altogether. Orwell himself states that his work can be read as a critique on revolution itself, although it is most enjoyable if read as an allegory to Soviet Russia. (superb historical context – this creates an intriguing root for you to begin your analysis)

Our tale commences in an anthropomorphic world led by humans. Here, our attention is diverted to a small farm in rural England, run by Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones is a cruel master. It is assumed that he regularly forgets to feed his animals due to excessive alcohol consumption. The most important fact, however, is that Mr. Jones *does not produce anything*. He relies on the work of these poor creatures to make a profit and live a life of luxury and excess, giving them the bare minimum. The analogy could not be more striking. Mr. Jones is our 19th Century Capitalist, driven by greed and power. Our animals are the workers, the laborers who break their backs for their masters, only to be paid a wage on which they can barely support themselves.

In this very farm, Major, an Old Pig, shares a profound dream with his comrades. His dream, apparently, is that of a free England – for those that walk on four legs. A revolution, he predicts, is not far away. The time is near when Mr. Jones shall be

overthrown and the animals will own the means to production. The revolution comes faster than expected, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones are driven out of their home, and the animals rejoice. They set up 10 commandments, or rules, that each and every one should follow. The new "Animal Farm", is managed by the pigs, since they are assumed to be the most intellectually superior. Things go downhill, however, when one of the pigs, Napoleon, exiles Snowball and the farm quickly transcends into a dictatorship.

Major, one of the first, (and justly so) characters we are introduced to, is an old, weary pig, sharing his ideas of an equal society in which animals own the means to production, rather than the farmer. The observant reader may recognize the similarities between Major and Karl Marx, a political activist and often referred to as the father of Communism. Both preach the same ideas, and both meet a fateful death before their ideas manifest into a chaotic revolution.

Snowball is another important character. He is one of the leaders of the revolution, representing Leon Trotsky, second-in-command to Lenin (former leader of the Soviet Union before his death). Snowball is shown to be valiant, as he shows bravery in the line of battle against the other farmers. However, Snowball and Napoleon always argue over policies, and when Snowball proposes the construction of a windmill that will automate their tasks, Napoleon blatantly refuses. This slowly builds up to the turning point: Napoleon unleashes his rabid dogs, the military, at Snowball, who flees the farm in fear and lives in exile, similar to Trotsky's exile.

Boxer, fittingly, is the horse. He is known for his labor and always tries to work harder in the face of adversity. Boxer provides the strongest reason to use animals to represent human characteristics. Our minds naturally associate horses with hard work. Boxer represents the working-class of the Soviet Union. This is Orwell's genius. He saves us from having to remember this fact while it implicitly exists in our subconscious mind. We see Boxer's struggle to outperform all animals, building up to a poignant scene where Boxer injures himself. Instead of

supporting him, the pigs send him to a slaughterhouse. What is Orwell trying to convey here? That the working-class are seen as disposable assets. Equality is merely a façade. One is expected to work day and night, only to be thrust into the cold clutches of death.

Squealer's transformation is interesting. Initially the young pig who is assigned the task of distributing news to the general population, eventually evolves into a brutal propaganda engine spreading lies and changing the past as seen fit. Squealer shares traits with the Department of Truth in Orwell's magnum opus 1984, since both assume that the past is malleable and it is their duty to shape it. We see Squealer in action as he alters the ten commandments, written to govern the animals, to fit the pigs' exploits. Example: "No animal shall consume alcohol", becomes "No animal shall consume alcohol to excess".

However, we've been ignoring the most important character of all – "Comrade" Napoleon. Napoleon is the counterpart to Stalin: Cold, Calculating, Cunning and Intelligent – but merciless; although, his leadership and motivational skills were quite efficient at motivating the building of the windmill as it was destroyed time and time again. Napoleon is the key figure in "Animal Farm", and it is his corruption that the book explores. It appears that at the start he truly cares for "animalism", a play on communism. However, as the story progresses it begins to appear that it is only his own goals that he cares for. This culminates in a horrifying ending in which Napoleon is indistinguishable from the humans, and even starts behaving like them, a nod to corruption in the Soviet Union.

There is a main, consistent theme throughout the book, and that is: How does power corrupt? For us, Napoleon is the very epitome of this idea. Corrupted by power, he evolves to become the very thing he pledged to eradicate. The irony in this is not merely satirical. These questions are still prevalent today. While "Animal Farm" is written in a fairy-tale-like manner, our planet is as real and tangible as ever. Power corrupts the best of us – and this message is embedded in every page. No matter how good of a system you have. No matter how innocent

your ambitions are. Raw, unregulated power can have devastating consequences. All that happens in any revolution led by humans, is a change of masters. The difference for the working-class is negligible. They will keep on working, ignorant of what is going around them. After all, nothing will change for them, no matter what. Capitalists can come and go, but workers, the laypeople, will stay the same.

This brings us to a stark realization. How are we to improve anything should this continue? Surely every subsequent revolution will change the masters. That is the law of Nature itself. Our current masters are Data Companies, result of the Information Revolution. It is left to the reader to decide whether they are benevolent or not. My opinion, however, is that they lie in a delicate balance between the two. How can we try to revolutionize society, when imperfect, highly malleable human beings take charge? The answer is not so simple, and in many cases, impractical. One way would be to institute a computer program as a “master”. Programs cannot be corrupted. Surely, they would make correct decisions. But this presents its own set of technological hurdles.

Overall, I would genuinely press this book to anyone – anyone at all. It is an essential read, for those to understand the underlying semantics of revolutions, and how power can be abused, trust can be manipulated, and how everything can fall apart. All this is in one tiny package. Especially relevant in today’s day and age, we cannot afford to let our guard down and fall prey to the words of another “*Napoleon*”, since:

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”

-Santayana

Superb work Ayush! Well done. Your analysis is rigorous and philosophical. I'm publishing this to the English blog. You should include it in the TY magazine too.

