

# Knowledge: A Sufficiency Economy Condition Obstructed in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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## Abstract

The study aims at investigating 1) knowledge according to Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) portrayed by Napoleon and Snowball, the main characters, in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*; 2) to what extent the two main characters portray it; and 3) what are the reasons behind the portrayals of it. The qualitative method is used in this study, and the results are presented in a form of descriptive analysis. The study finds that Napoleon and Snowball have knowledge according to SEP. They acquire it from a wide variety of books. Additionally, Napoleon depicts himself as a brainworker who uses only brain to work. Unlike Napoleon, Snowball is demonstrated to understand and practice the knowledge in many ways as well as possessing an inventive skill. Also, Snowball is found being able to write, read, answer a question as well as giving an explanation and a speech. The reasons behind Napoleon and Snowball's portrayals of having the knowledge in terms of SEP and being knowledgeable are to exploit the animals and replace human farm owners. The study also finds that the lack of morality and moderation causes the benefits of knowledge to be blocked for all. As a result, Napoleon and Snowball are still demonstra

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as being infatuated with greed for power, materialistic ideals, and moral devastation. Meanwhile, the farm animals are fixed into a servitude condition eternally.

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## 1. Introduction

A number of literary works portray various types of values that, more or less, help raise readers' awareness on living their life in this complex world. The values portrayed in these works such as a simple way of living and self-sufficiency are described as key characteristics of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). In Thailand, SEP and its characteristics—moderation, self-immunity, and reasonableness—were first bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1974. Later on, in 1998 and 1999, the King added the two underlying conditions—knowledge and morality—to provide a solid foundation of the philosophy. *Rachroat Punyaboon (2011)* concludes that SEP is a set of moral, ethical, and practical guidelines intended to help Thai people more effectively navigate globalization through adherence to the principles of moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity in the light of knowledge and virtue.

Nida Meesook (2007) studies *Makatho's Self-Growth and the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy*. In this study, the self-growth of Makatho, the main character, in Rajadhiraja, the epic about the battle between Burmese and Mon (an ethnic group) is analyzed. Meesook reports that sufficiency has been reflected through the story significantly. Moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity including knowledge and morality are seen. Makathos' self-growth demonstrates the sense of sufficiency as a careful and gradual change with morality, but without stinginess. In addition, the analysis values the philosophy as an

*outstanding path leading people to step forward with sustainability and security.* This study confirms that the elements of SEP can be seen through a characteristic and an action of this main character.

Nontcharas Wongwichaiwat (2009) writes an article entitled *An Analysis of the Concept of Sufficiency Economy in Wang Dokya by V. Vinicchayakul*. He states that the SEP concept and practices can be investigated in the Thai way of life in urban areas. Likewise, Weerachat Sirikraiwattanawong (2009) conducts a study, *Analysis of Sufficient Economy Philosophy Appeared in Khun Chang Khun Phan*. The study shows that all five SEP principles: moderation, reasonableness, self-reliance, knowledge, and morality are practiced by the characters in the story. Also, Sanom Krootmaung's *Thai Folk Fables in the Lower Northern Part of Thailand: An Analysis for Sufficiency as a Way of Living Life* (2010) investigates sufficiency features in 36 Thai folk fables in the lower northern part of Thailand. The study reports that self-sufficiency occurs most frequently in the fables, followed by rationality and self-protection respectively. The characters demonstrate the feature of wise decision-making most often, including self-dependency and sharing.

Apart from those Thai literary works, *Animal Farm*, Western literature, was published in 1945. It is one of the world classics in which George Orwell, the British author, presents the idea of an ideal state—the state where everyone lives with sustainable happiness in harmony and without being exploited. In *Animal Farm*, Major, the oldest male pig, lays a political theory that focuses on better life with equality, without being overloaded with physical hard labor, and without human farm owners. After laying the theory, Major dies in the first scene. Thereupon, the theory leads the farm animals to revolt against human owners. After the victorious revolution, the animals are led by two male pigs, Snowball and Napoleon. They pursue the policy to found a “free and self-sufficient” society. Later, the clashes between Snowball and Napoleon have arisen because of the different views of managing farm productivity and controlling

the animals. After Snowball is exiled, the farm turns into dictatorship under the iron heel of greedy Napoleon. At the end, the animals cannot distinguish the pigs from their common enemies—humans.

According to the story, Orwell depicts the ideal state under socialism. Socialism is a political and economic system which is explained by Thomas Fleming as the society in which everyone contributes necessary basic things such as food, shelters, and clothes to the common interests. Fleming explains socialism that it values common interests rather than personal benefits, “That society, or rather government, should own and/ or control the means of production, private property, and wealth, all of which have to be used for the benefit of everyone and not simply for the benefit of a rich individual or a privileged minority” (2008).

In *Animal Farm*, Snowball, the main character, presents the ideal of socialism which reflects the characteristics of SEP. John W. Campbell (2000) describes Snowball in Page 30 that he has a vision of a self-sufficient farm which reflects moderation of SEP, “Has visions of self-sufficient society in which, for example, windmill can harness natural power to serve animals.” In the story, the animals hope that, eventually, everything in the farm is possessed by all farm animals. Orwell (1996) demonstrates the significance of the common gains which can be seen through a slogan that values the equality among the farm animals as the most significance, as seen in Page 17, “All animals are equal.”

Nonetheless, the problems still arise. All animals have faced many hardships throughout the story. That is, they fail to live with happiness in harmony in that ideal society. The farm animals have a hope to run their life within moderation in order to live happily in the peaceful environment without human control. Moderation that refers to the satisfaction of basic needs or the condition of having food, shelter, clothing, and medicine is focused on. Meanwhile, knowledge that refers to knowledge itself as well as skills and experience accumulated from various subjects or activities from the past and present is portrayed clearly by

the main characters. However, all of them are not able to stabilize the farm. Furthermore, all farm animals keep on living in misery and hunger throughout the story. This article aims at demonstrating knowledge, a sufficiency economy condition, which is obstructed in *Animal Farm*. The article focuses on three main points: 1) what kind of knowledge is portrayed by Napoleon and Snowball—the main characters; 2) to what extent the two main characters portray the knowledge; and 3) what are the reasons behind the portrayals of it. Moreover, the article points out that although having SEP knowledge, Napoleon and Snowball are still portrayed as being infatuated with greed for power, materialistic ideals, and moral devastation.

## 2. Research Methodology

The qualitative method is conducted through the following steps. First, the data is collected from the dialogues of Napoleon and Snowball, the main characters, in *Animal Farm* when they talk to each other and while talking with the farm animals. Also, the narration of their actions and the circumstances surrounding are investigated. Second, the data is analyzed by exploring knowledge—one of the SEP characteristics—of these two main characters, investigating to what extent they portray the SEP characteristics, and examining the reasons behind the portrayals of these characteristics. Third, the discussion of findings is presented.

## 3. Research Findings

Napoleon, one of the main characters, presents knowledge according to SEP. It is the knowledge he acquires from reading a wide variety of books as Orwell (1996) demonstrates, “Here, in the evening, they studied blacksmithing, carpentering, and other necessary arts from books which they had brought out of the farmhouse” (page 21). This type of knowledge has been searched, gathered,

and organized over a period of time before it is written or printed in a form of books. Particularly, details in the books are about blacksmithing and carpentering involving making and repairing things in the farm that have to be practiced and gathered for years before they are printed.

Furthermore, the necessary arts imply that Napoleon learns something that is not just a scientific skill. Namely, the arts are knowledge about a complex ability or skill involved in doing or making something beyond the process of sciences. For this case, the knowledge of the arts can be investigated through his act of raising nine puppies and preparing them to be his secret fierce guards. That is, while Snowball is trying to educate the animals, Napoleon uses the education to bring him some benefits in a different way. Orwell (1996) portrays Napoleon's particular aim to use education, "He said that the education of the young was more important than anything that could be done for those who were already grown up. It happened that Jessie and Bluebell had both whelped soon after the hay harvest, giving birth between them to nine sturdy puppies" (page 24-25). At that moment, Napoleon claims the importance of education in order to take the puppies away from the mothers, "As soon as they were weaned, Napoleon took them away from their mothers, saying that he would make himself responsible for their education" (page 25). It is clear that Napoleon uses education not only to claim his right over the puppies but also to train them as his fierce guard dogs. This results in the animals' fear of deaths and danger under his leadership. With the education, he has the fierce guard dogs; with these dogs, he can control the farm more easily. That is, Napoleon uses education as a false claim to benefit others while it benefits only himself. Although the story does not show clearly that what kind of arts Napoleon has learned, the way Napoleon uses the meaning of education reflects his presentiment and the complex ability to control the farm and even to gain absolute power. Therefore, Napoleon's knowledge can be categorized into two aspects. First, appropriate and technical knowledge

that is useful for working in a farm. Second, it is the knowledge that is learned in order to manage both the farm and the farm animals as a whole. Napoleon has learned a wide variety of knowledge which reflects experience having gained for years such as blacksmithing, carpentering and other arts, found in Page 21, “blacksmithing, carpentering, and other necessary arts from books” (Orwell, 1996). As a result, Napoleon’s knowledge is the knowledge in terms of SEP.

In addition to the knowledge from the books, Napoleon portrays himself as a knowledgeable one. To do so, he calls himself as a brainworker whose sole responsibility is to manage and organize the animal farm rather than doing physical hard labor. Orwell (1996) depicts Napoleon to say, “We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organization of this farm depend on us” (page 24). In fact, a brainworker refers to the one who uses only brain, but not hands, to work. When the brain works, the action is far from any physical hard labor. On the contrary, it is the work of thinking, managing, organizing, ordering, and even controlling others. Furthermore, the brainworker is ready to become more and more knowledgeable because he or she naturally always uses the brain to work. This makes him or her become more knowledgeable because of experiencing and learning accumulated from using brain. In addition, while Napoleon declares his unique ability to think through the action of using brain rather than hands, he is differentiating the animals to be the ones who are not the brainworkers. For this case, the farm animals can be called “handworkers” who have only duty that is doing physical hard work, with hands.

Like Napoleon, Snowball, another main character, acquires knowledge from a wide variety of books. However, Snowball is notably displayed to be more knowledgeable than Napoleon. In addition to the books Napoleon has read, Snowball reads several books about skills necessary for farm management like *Farmer and Stockbreeder*, *One Thousand Useful Things to Do about the House*, *Every Man His Own Bricklayer*, and *Electricity for Beginners*. These books

indicate that Snowball has knowledge according to SEP. They also indicate that Snowball learns a lot about planning, innovations, and improvements. Later on, his knowledge reflects notably when he shows the ability to exchange ideas with others as a smart person as found in Page 33, “He talked learnedly about field drains, silage, and basic slag, and had worked out a complicated scheme for all animals to drop their dung directly in the fields, at a different spot every day, to save the labour of cartage” (Orwell, 1996).

Snowball shows not only the attempts to learn but also the ability to understand and practice knowledge after learning. Even, he can apply the idea into reality, in Pages 33-34, “Within a few weeks Snowball’s plans for the windmill were fully worked out. The mechanical details came mostly from three books which had belonged to Mr. Jones—*One Thousand Useful Things to Do about the House*, *Every Man His Own Bricklayer*, and *Electricity for Beginners*” (Orwell, 1996). The creation of the windmill indicates that Snowball can perform the practical skills after having learned particular knowledge from the books. It also reflects his higher intellectual level to make full use of knowledge in real life. Additionally, the plan of the windmill reflects his ability to plan ahead for the future. Most of all, it obscures his technique to maintain the domination by responding the animals’ need for comfortable and better life in the land without human power.

In addition to having knowledge, Snowball is also characterized as an inventive one. Even, when compared with Napoleon, Snowball is found more inventive than him, “Snowball was a more vivacious pig than Napoleon, quicker in speech and more inventive, but was not considered to have the same depth of character” (Orwell, 1996). The study finds that after Snowball has read Mr. Jones’ three books, Snowball comes up with the idea of the windmill which reflects his inventive skill applied from the books he has just read, in Pages 33-34, “Within a few weeks Snowball’s plans for the windmill were fully worked out. The mechanical details came mostly from three books which had belonged



to Mr. Jones—*One Thousand Useful Things to Do About the House, Every Man His Own Bricklayer, and Electricity for Beginners*” (Orwell, 1996). The windmill is new and different in the farm. Even, it appears as the new invention that no one has never offered and even never known it before. If the windmill is built, it will bring a lot of benefits to not only the animals but the farm as a whole. As it can harness the power of the wind to produce electricity and even power to grind corn into flour, its advantages to the farm will be the light and heat, the reduction of animals’ labor use, the increased farm productivity, and so on. That is, when Snowball applies knowledge from several books to invent the technology, his inventive skill is seen.

Apart from knowledgeable and inventive characteristics, the idea of the windmill reflects Snowball’s self-sufficient characteristic. As the windmill is appropriate technology designed to use just in the animal farm, it reflects his own belief in self-sufficient society—the land in which people can live independently without helps from the immense world outside. This can be interpreted that Snowball displays a self-sufficient characteristic because he shows his attempt to produce technology to use in the farm to help the farm animals to stay independently without any helps from humans living in the outside world. As said previously, Campbell (2000) points out that Snowball has a vision of a self-sufficient state, “Has visions of self-sufficient society in which, for example, windmill can harness natural power to serve animals” (page 30).

Apart from reading books, Snowball is described with a wide variety of abilities such as writing, reading, answering, and giving an explanation. As SEP knowledge in this study refers to knowledge, skills, and experience accumulated from various subjects or activities from the past and present. These skills indicate that Snowball has knowledge in terms of SEP. It is because the skills can be shown just after people have accumulated, learned and practiced some knowledge or skills. In this case, writing, reading, answering, and giving an explanation are the

skills that, in general, need intensive practice. Snowball's writing skill is portrayed when the pigs agree to turn the name Manor Farm into the new name—Animal Farm—in order to imprint the sense of the ownership into the farm animals' mind. At that moment, Orwell (1996) displays Snowball to be selected to write that new name, "Then Snowball (for it was Snowball who was best at writing) took a brush between the two knuckles of his trotter, painted out MANOR FARM from the top bar of the gate and in its place painted ANIMAL FARM" (page 16). Another example, in Page 17, is Snowball's reading skill. It is, then, shown immediately after he has finished this writing, "Snowball read it aloud for the benefit of others" (Orwell, 1996).

Another sign of Snowball's SEP knowledge can be noticed when he speaks. Speaking can be categorized as SEP knowledge because this skill requires knowledge accumulated over time from reading, talking, watching, and so on. Furthermore, giving a speech refers to a greater ability more than speaking because it means the ability to speak. Also, it is more formal than general speaking. Often, only the most important person of all gives a speech on behalf of the group. In the story, in Page 32, Snowball's speaking ability is displayed through his brilliant speeches which are seen more clearly when it is compared with Napoleon's, "At the Meetings, Snowball often won over the majority by his brilliant speeches, but Napoleon was better at canvassing support for himself in between times" (Orwell, 1996). Although these statements point out the substantially different manners of Snowball and Napoleon, Snowball's knowledgeable skill is seen more clearly than Napoleon. It is seen from the statement affirming that Snowball is always being the winner in terms of speeches.

Providing an explanation is also a distinctive action proving that Snowball is knowledgeable. Full details of the explanation actually reflect a lot of knowledge. In Page 20, Snowball is found being able to give not only details but also a comparison of fertile land of England combined with the need to

conquer it by taking it from humans, “The flag was green, Snowball explained, to represent the green fields of England, while the hoof and horn signified the future Republic of the Animals which would arise when the human race had been finally overthrown” (Orwell, 1996).

For more interpretation, the study finds that the reasons behind Napoleon and Snowball’s portrayals of having knowledge are to replace humans as well as exploiting the animals. First, the two pigs study and use knowledge of humans to make them become as intelligent as them and more intelligent than other animals. In addition to the benefits to working in and managing the farm, Napoleon uses that knowledge to differentiate him as a brilliant leader who has the ability to absorb knowledge other animals do not have. The knowledge even differentiates him to be a superior with authority and decision-making responsibility as seen in the maxim in Page 39, “Napoleon is always right” (Orwell, 1996). This brings about Napoleon’s distinctive look and causes him to deserve to be a new leader instead of human owners.

Second, Napoleon uses knowledge from those books as a tool to control the animals. The content of those books not only helps him to understand the farm mechanical devices but provides a good way to manage the animals and the farm as a whole. Throughout the story, Napoleon has never been found working any hard work but exploiting the animals instead. For example, he takes advantage of the animals by ordering them to do the farm work in Page 74, “A week later Napoleon gave orders that the small paddock beyond the orchard, which it had previously been intended to set aside as a grazing-ground for animals who were past work, was to be ploughed up” (Orwell, 1996).

Napoleon’s exploitation of the animals is also seen when he takes benefits of the farm productivity more than others. He claims that he has to have only good food because he is a pig whose duty is to lead others in Page 24, “Milk and apples (this has been proved Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely

necessary to the well-being of a pig” (Orwell, 1996). According to Napoleon, the one with brain has the right not only to reject the hard work but also to eat only high quality food. Only the management is the work a brainworker has to do, so Napoleon just thinks, plans, and orders. For the animals, they deserve to be workers who have to listen to and follow Napoleon as well as doing physical hard work because of having no brain. That is to say, the portrayals of having knowledge or working with brain reflect Napoleon’s need to exploit the farm animals as well as replacing humans.

Like Napoleon, Snowball also values the same reasons. That is, Snowball makes full use of knowledge to help him to be able to replace human owners as well as exploiting the farm animals. With knowledge, Snowball finds a sensible way to unite, manage, and even order the animals. It appears that after he has read the book of Julius Caesar, he can control the animals in Page 27, “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” (Orwell, 1996). The extraction above reveals that Snowball is good at ordering because the animals come quickly and are ready to be in order to do their job ordered by him. After he has led the animals to force out Mr. Jones, the farm owner, and his men, Snowball again leads a successful fight at the “Battle of the Cowshed”. In this battle, Snowball is awarded a military medal, “Animal Hero, First Class” as found in Pages 29-30, “The animals decided unanimously to create a military decoration, “Animal Hero. First Class,” which was conferred there and then on Snowball and Boxer” (Orwell, 1996). These situations indicate that Snowball reads the book of Julius Caesar and, later on, applies Caesar’s political ideal to lead the animals to revolt against humans and to control them. In addition, the idea of the windmill gained from reading a book reflects not only an innovative skill but a genius presentiment of Snowball to focus on comfortable and better life the animals have dreamed for.

#### 4. Discussion

Like *the findings reported by Meesook in Rajadhiraja, Wongwichaiwat in Wang Dokya, Sirikrai wattanawong in Khun Chang Khun Phan*, and Krootmaung in Thai folk fables, the main characters in *Animal Farm* portray a SEP feature. However, no one in *Animal Farm* can reach the SEP ultimate outcome—living in harmony and with happiness. It is because when Napoleon and Snowball, the two main characters, are portrayed to have SEP knowledge, the portrayals of such knowledge are just for benefiting themselves, but not for others or the whole group. The reasons behind the portrayals that are to exploit the animals and to replace human farm owners are the real factors that obstruct the knowledge to benefit the whole farm.

Apart from knowledge, Napoleon and Snowball do not have morality. The study also finds that Napoleon betrays his own beliefs in Seven Commandments, displays brutality, uses power over others, and gives lies. This is consistent with Campbell's analysis (2000) which demonstrates the use of power of Napoleon, "Napoleon strengthens his power by using as bodyguards a group of ferocious dogs he has raised from puppies" (page 31). For Snowball, Campbell (2000) views him as the one who tries to lead the animals to stay independently without humans, as seen in Page 32, "and of their ability to survive independently when they use common sense and reason, not tyranny." However, this study finds something different from Campbell. With more knowledge and an inventive skill, Snowball makes full use of his unique capacity to exploit and control the animals. That is to say, these two main characters apply knowledge and skills to serve their own ambitions in order to replace humans as well as gaining and maintaining power.

Without moral awareness, both Napoleon and Snowball display no moderation. In other words, they are demonstrated without the satisfaction of humans' basic needs or the condition of having food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. The

study finds that after morality is blocked, the two main characters do not become aware of moderation. Napoleon shows his greed with no consideration for other animals. Meanwhile, Snowball offers the idea of the windmill— technology that is the fundamental factor of the capitalist ideal. This reflects living under the influence of competitiveness and money rather than living with basic needs. The reasons cause both Napoleon and Snowball to display no moderation are the need to replace humans as well as gaining power. That is, throughout the story, the knowledge according to SEP is blocked by greed for power that is seen when Napoleon and Snowball attempt to replace humans as well as exploiting the farm animals.

On the contrary, the animals are fixed into a servitude condition eternally because of their lack of the ability to acquire any form of knowledge. The animals keep on working hard within long hours and staying in miserable conditions. Meanwhile, they are depicted without the capacity to absorb knowledge. Until the end of the story, they still wait for better things, but it is found just a hope, as seen in Page 95, “None of the old dreams had been abandoned. The Republic of the Animals which Major had foretold, when the green fields of England should be untrodden by human feet, was still believed in. Some day it was coming” (Orwell, 1996). Although the knowledge according to SEP can be grasped, it is not useful for the animals. It is because Napoleon and Snowball practices that knowledge just to benefit themselves, or in other words, to exploit the animals as well as replacing humans. They use the SEP knowledge to make them gain superiority. Also, they use it as a basic guideline to manage the farm in order to gain productivity as high as it is possible without caring about the animals. Particularly, the knowledge from the books supports them to maintain the domination after they have grasped it from humans. Therefore, the needs to control and to replace humans cause the knowledge in terms of SEP to be blocked. As a result, it does not bring about equality and self-sufficiency to the farm animals.

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