

## **Imagining Symbiosis: A Critique of Human-Animal Dichotomy in E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web***

Bhup Raj Joshi

Assistant Prof., Far Western University

Mahendranagar, Nepal

Email: [bhuprajoshi330@gmail.com](mailto:bhuprajoshi330@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*This research work explores the relationship between human beings and animals with the ecocritical lens. It finds a symbiotic relationship between the two species that leads the work to critiquing pervasive speciesism in human. This research draws on critical and theoretical insights from Emmanuel Levinas's (1995) ethical perspectives on interest, Derrida's (2008) concept of relative existence, as well as issues of ecological-environmental justice and other philosophical, ethical, and biological viewpoints from the critics. These considerations are central to critiquing the human-nonhuman animal dichotomy and highlighting a state of symbiosis. The human and nonhuman beings appear in the contesting relation in the culture leading to the state of negation, exploitation, consumption and extinction. From wild to tamed, aquatic to terrestrial, small to the big, powerful to the powerless all nonhuman animals have to live defensive lives and humans behave in offensive way against them. The discourse that human is endowed with prerogatives over the nonhumans is self-created. Thus, the rivalry between human and animal is a suicidal contest between culture and nature. This research work focuses on understanding the original relationship between humans and nonhuman beings. It examines how humans perceive and interact with animals. It also explores the reasons behind human attitudes toward animals. Additionally, it highlights how animals shape human identity and existence. Finally, it emphasizes the need to establish a symbiotic bond between humans and nonhuman beings for sustainable coexistence. Human-animal relationship is shown through the study of the primary text, *Charlotte's Web* (1952).*

**Key Words:** Symbiosis, dichotomy, speciesism, reciprocity, exploitation

### **Introduction**

This paper explores the anthropocentric practices of humans within the earth community by examining E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) through an eco-critical lens. The primary focus is on the relationship between humans and animals, addressing both its significance and the challenges presented in the text. Humans often exploit animals and natural resources to fulfill their desire for power. The study explores in E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* how human beings create dichotomy with animals in order to keep them in a dominant position and how they define animals to meet the human-made standard. E.B. White's stance on the vulnerability of the life of a pig is not reasonable to substantiate the argument that all species of animals including humans deserve equal rights to life, pursuits of pleasure, and avoiding pain. In the narrative, Arable wants to kill the newly born piglet on the ground of its abnormally small size. He expects it to be in a large size like other piglets but to his dismay, the pig does not meet his standard so he wants to kill it. The human supremacy

over the animals gets exposed at Arable's attitude towards the pig, namely Wilber. Like the children of Arable, the runt also has natural right to life. But it is at risk only being an animal; Wilbur is under the process of death.

The exploitation of animals and nature cannot create a favorable environment for a better life, as their well-being is deeply linked to the health of other species and the ecosystem. Thus, anthropocentric efforts to pursue happiness are inherently contradictory. In satisfying their desires and finding happiness by manipulating and exploiting other creatures, humans demonstrate a cost-benefit mindset. This disregard for non-human life, combined with a focus on immediate personal gain, upholds the long-established tradition of speciesism—the belief in human dominance and superiority over non-human life.

The Earth's ecosystem functions through the balanced contributions of all living and non-living entities. The well-being or happiness of any species relies on the fair consideration of the interests of all species; however, the reality is quite the opposite. Human self-centered actions in pursuit of a better life are ultimately self-destructive in the long run. Despite the complementary roles humans and animals have played throughout history, dating back to the dawn of civilization, the prevailing belief in human superiority has negatively impacted other creatures and the environment.

Human discourses on animals and the environment have historically defined, controlled, and exploited non-human life. The pursuit of material prosperity at the expense of exploiting animals has placed their survival at great risk. The human identity as superior to animals, and the creation of the 'self,' is rooted in a discriminatory attitude. Human civilization has constructed a binary relationship, where animals are seen as the 'other,' and humans as the 'self.' In *The Origin of Species* (1859), Charles Darwin introduced the scientific concept of natural selection, demonstrating that all species, including humans and animals, share a common ancestry. Over time, divergence and hierarchy among species developed, but their origins were the same.

Humans, however, view other species primarily as objects to fulfill their desires. This anthropocentric mindset has led to selfish and cruel treatment of animals. The constructed human-animal dichotomy, driven by profit and domination, has been in place since humanity's earliest days. However, this division is illogical, artificial, and superficial. A closer examination reveals significant similarities between humans and animals in terms of origin, evolution, psychology, and physical traits.

Levinas (1989), in *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, emphasizes the ethical responsibility humans have toward animals. He argues that the "face" of an animal should evoke a moral response, preventing acts like killing. Levinas (1995) highlights that encountering the face of any being, including animals, triggers an ethical reaction in humans, underlining the importance of recognizing the moral significance of animals: "The animal has a face, and the face is what forbids us to kill." (89). He stresses on the point that meeting with face of other being including animals provokes an ethical response and reaction in the human. The dichotomy between human being and animals is based on the profit motive of humanity. This human strategy has been in practice since time immemorial or the time when the human species appeared on the earth. In *The Animal That*

*Therefore I Am*, Derrida (2008) notes that animals are not merely passive objects but have their own perspectives. He emphasizes that animals observe and interpret humans, just as humans do them. Derrida suggests that human existence and identity are deeply intertwined with animals. Both humans and animals have similar perspectives, reinforcing the idea of interdependence in existence.

Except for the human-centered culture, nature in its organic form shows symbiotic relations between and among the species. Nature endows similar attributes to humans and animals. It suggests that a human turns hostile to animals only after socialization. A child in the early phase is the epitome of innocence and love to all. It is the human civilization that corrupts gradually by turning into selfishness and by teaching a sense of exploitation of nonhumans. It draws the demarcations of exclusion. In this connection, Glen Love (2003) writes in *Practical Criticism*: “Human behavior is not an empty vessel whose only input will be that provided by nature, but it is strongly influenced by a genetic orientation that underlies or modifies or is modified by cultural influences” (6). It echoes the sense that culture makes humans a gradual enemy of nature. One is guided by the previous generations' attitude to fellow creatures.

### **Materials and Methods**

This section explores reviews and literature on E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), analyzed from multiple perspectives. Employing a qualitative research method, the study utilizes textual analysis through an ecocritical lens in *Charlotte's Web*. Secondary sources, including library materials, books, research journals, and articles, have been critically examined for exploring symbiosis. Insights from scholars such as Peter Singer are considered to explore concepts of equality and the importance of maintaining the ecosystem. The narrative is analyzed with a focus on the rhetoric of biospherical egalitarianism. The human tendency to establish a binary between humans and animals, a practice rooted in ancient times, is critiqued as being illogical, artificial, and superficial. A closer analysis reveals significant similarities between humans and animals concerning their origins, evolution, and psychological and physical attributes in human and animal characters in the novel.

### **Results and Discussions**

In *Charlotte's Web*, Fern's bonding with Wilbur (pig) and Arvy's love for the frog show that humans and animals are originally in symbiotic relations. The dominating trends in human development along with the utilitarian ideas. Ferns, an innocent human loves, cares for, and rears the runt pig without any selfishness whereas her father, Arable, and mother Arable have planned to kill it only for not meeting their expectations. Fern's mother says: “One of the pigs is a runt. It is very small and weak, and it will never amount to anything. So your father has decided to do away with it...Do not yell Fern! Your father is right. The pig would die anyway” (p. 1). This quote of Mrs. Arable aligns with the profit motive of Arable. They represent the material culture that counts everything in amount and personal benefit. Arable's idea to kill the runt pig is influenced by the anthropocentric culture he has been socialized with. He must have been an innocent and reconciliatory to the animals in the age of Fern now.

When Fern gets a pig from her father, she gives it the name 'Wilber'. Naming someone means to use language. The use of language gives existence to someone or something. She, like humans, equalizes the pig with the name. Recognizing the pig with the name reminds us of the co-existence of humans and animals. To use Heidegger's (1998) idea, the 'being' of the pig is counted in the language. In "Letter on Humanism" he says: "Language is the house of being. In its home, human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying (p. 217)." It remarks that language is more than a tool. We live in our language; our lives are determined by it and we think insofar as we bring 'Being' to language.

In *Charlotte's Web*, the existence of pig and spider are brought to language with the names Wilbur and Charlotte. Before they were named, their existence was not counted by human beings. The use of language by the goose, gander, rat, pig, Charlotte, etc. in the novel also validates their equal existence to humans. But it is the human thought that animals do not have their existence/identity as they lack language. In *Charlotte's Web*, Fern brings the pig into 'Being' through language: "Fern named her pet, selecting the most beautiful name she could think of. Its name is Wilbur (3)." "She was so grossed in Wilbur that she unconsciously happens to reply her teacher in the class. "Fern, what is the capital of Pennsylvania?" "Wilbur" replied, Fern (p. 3)". This error proves Fern's engagement with the pig with no sense of othering the animal. The above quote justifies the human reconciliatory attitude in its original or innocent stage. One of the landmarks of symbiotic bondage is the presence of cooperation and coexistence, which is primarily limited to the human world only. Humans do not consider the sense of sharing and caring in the animals. But the animals possess it to an equal extent. In this regard, Lents (2016) says:

For social species, cooperation is essential to living together peacefully. The community cannot thrive if individual members try to sneak more than their fair share or get away with not pulling their weight in the herd or pack...Natural selection would thus select against the selfish through their banishment, pro-social behaviors, come with no direct benefit to the individual, only to others or to the group (p. 55).

He highlights community feelings and mutual help for the animals living in the society. More than the personal benefit, they require promoting and praising social/communal living. These kinds of behaviors were once thought to be found only in humans. For the common welfare, the social animals may exclude their selfish and uncooperative members. In an episode of *Charlotte's Web*, this principle is evident when Wilbur is offered help by other animals to escape from the barn:

"Run toward me!" yelled the gander.

"Run uphill!" cried the sheep.

"Turn and twist!" honked the goose.

"Jump and dance!" said the rooster.

"Look out for Lurvy!" called the cows.

"Look out for Zuckerman!" yelled the gander. (p. 11)

To save Wilbur from getting grabbed by Lurvy and Zuckerman, his fellow animals try their level best. They all encourage and inspire Wilbur to continue efforts for liberation. They do not turn selfish and sadist by looking into his pain. They have a sense of sympathy and empathy towards the pig. It tells that the animals are also social beings in terms of cooperative feelings.

Out of the multiple humanistic features, time consciousness and time keeping are supposed to be a typical human quality as claimed by anthropocentrism. But the animals are equally aware of the morning, day, night, and other temporal phenomena. The return of the cattle from the jungle at sunset, and the crowing of the cock in the morning, signifies the animal's response to the pace of time. They are quite vigilant of time as Blanchard et al. (2007) opine: "Vigilant they are in time-consuming since time is usually a limited resource for free-ranging animals, it may conflict with other activities such as feeding. They have routine vigilance when the animal is simply monitoring its surroundings during spare time (p. 54)." For nonhuman animals, the importance and relation of time to their daily activities are worthy of mention. Therefore, in utilizing time, they are well-routined and conscious even of their leisure time. They think about their future at present. They come up with their routine plan like humans. The pig, Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web* meets the logic of time vigilance:

He had other plans too. His plans for the day went something like this: Breakfast would be finished at seven. From seven to eight, Wilbur planned to have a take with Templeton. From eight to nine, Wilbur planned to take a nap outdoors in the sun. From nine to eleven, he planned to dig a hole...From eleven to twelve, he planned to stand still and watch flies on the board (p. 278).

Wilbur has a compact schedule of a day just like the busy human beings in their daily pursuits. He could have lived idly had he not been aware of the flow of time. The above schedule or an animal proves that they are preoccupied with the sense of time. Wilbur must have been familiar with the continuity of time.

Conventionally accepted as the typical human trends of intolerance, sadness, and even disliking foods in mental and physical discomforts are carried by nonhumans, too. They give up their food and rest in an emotional breakdown. They display various similarities in the loss or grief. Along with the physical expression, responses, and actions in such situations, their psychological or inner responses mark much. To support this idea of inner responsiveness, Lents (2016) deserves quoting in the following lines: "I think it is safe to say that animals display many of the same symptoms of grief that humans do. They withdraw socially, eat less and play less. It even appears as if some animal experiences a bit of denial. Denial is often the first stage of grief in humans (p. 94)." Nathan posits that upon rejection or dejection, it is not only the humans to demonstrate abnormal psychic behavior but the animals also go to the extent of self-denial or negation. This idea of self-denial and unhappiness of animals can be substantiated by the following textual evidence in chapter four of *Charlotte's Web*:

This was almost more than Wilbur could stand; on the dreary, rainy day to see his breakfast eaten by somebody else...friendless, dejected, and hungry, he threw himself

down in the manure and sobbed ... "I think there is something wrong with that pig of yours. He has not touched his food..." said Zuckerman (p. 16).

It can be confirmed from the above that the internal desires to eat, play, and be happy have some cause-effect relation in the animals like human traits.

Charlotte, in the narrative, is very skillful in making herself fit into the situations. Her existence and tactics to live in the company of other animals match the Darwinian idea of survival of the fittest and adaptability. Her understanding of survival reminds me of the fact that all organisms have evolved through an adaptive process of natural selection and complex functional structure. Carroll (2013) writes in his book *Literary Darwinism*:

All organisms have a universal, species typical array of behavioral and cognitive characteristics. They presuppose that all such characteristics are genetically constrained and that these constraints are mediated through anatomical features and psychological processes, including the neurological and hormonal systems that directly regulate perception, thoughts, and feelings. (p. vi)

This idea of Carroll (2013) assumes the behavior and psychology of the species have to do with inheritance and modification. They have to primarily depend on the original features or physical, mental, and functional activities of their predecessors but at the same time their existence is conditioned by the social environment. They have to abide by their racial system of collecting and eating food, fulfilling their desire in their creativity and efforts.

E.B. White depicts the aforementioned Darwinian philosophy in *Charlotte's Web* through the speech of Charlotte in terms of receiving and eating food for survival:

Nobody feeds me. I have to get my own living. I live by my own wits. I have to be sharp and clever, lest I go hungry. I have to think things out, catch what you can, take what comes and it just so happens my friend that what comes is flies and insects and bugs and furthermore, do you realize that if I did not catch bugs and eat them, bugs would increase and multiply and get so numerous that they would destroy the earth, wipe out everything (p. 21)

Charlotte's confirmation about the way of his survival in the above statement confirms Carroll's (2013) assumption. As the spider, Charlotte has to seek her feedings on her own. Nature has endowed certain tricks to catch the insects and flies to her race, which she inherited from her begetters.

The human-animal identification and subjectivity formation proceeds as the plot advances. Fern and Wilbur stand on the same platform in forming their identity. Wilbur encourages Fern to identify herself with the pig. It develops their subjectivity, Karen Coats' ideas in this connection in *Looking Glasses and Neverland: Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity in Children's Literature* matter: "*Charlotte's Web* as a Lacanian Poetics...in its allegorical representation of the development of subjectivity. Both the girl and the pig Wilbur become subjects through social interactions (p. 32). Coats mean to theorize the case of Fern and Wilbur's friendship in an identical mode. To put it another way, human's (Fern) identification with the animal (pig) has been possible by the characterization of them as very small and

weak. As the children, they both undergo socialization and maturation with the advancement of the plot. Not only Fern but Charlotte proves to be equal by making a tricky plan to protect Wilbur from being killed.

It is Charlotte who makes Wilbur live with and struggle against the human characters. Charlotte, as an insect turns out to be smarter than the human. So, the human ingenuity can be traced in the animals. In some cases, they can become clever and smarter than the superior human mind. The proximity in the mental smartness enables them to live with humans in both competitive and co-coordinating relations. In the eyes of the critic Ratelle (2014) in the article "Ethics and Edibility in *Charlotte's Web*": "E.B. White grants Wilbur a unique animal subjectivity through Charlotte's ingenious plan aiming to make the human community complicit in recognition of Wilbur as an individual (p. 334)." She asserts that it is the witty Charlotte that gives an idea to bring Wilbur into recognition among the people at home and then in the fair. Had there not been Charlotte, the pig (Wilbur) would have been killed by Zuckerman at Christmas. Ratelle's (2014) claim about the contribution and mental equality of the spider to outsmart Zuckerman's plan of killing Wilbur can be supported through the following narrative in the text:

If she says they plan to kill you, I am sure it is true. It is also the direst trick I ever heard of. What people do not think of...But I am going to save you and I want you to be quiet down immediately. You are crying on in a childish way...The way to save Wilbur's life is to play trick on Zuckerman. I can surely fool a man. People are not as smart as the bugs... and people are very gullible (pp. 27-32).

In this speech of Charlotte, the sense of confidence and assurance to Wilbur can be seen. When Wilbur comes to know about the reason for fattening him, he is worried about the inevitable death at the hands of his owner. The bad news puts Wilbur into the death vision. He starts crying to face it.

For a long past, human traditions have made nonhuman animals the goods for consumption. To eat the meat, humans rear the animals by rendering them almost invisible and unworthy of serious attention, which is against their ethics and justice. Though the Slaughter of domesticated animals might not take place every day among the peasants, it occurs commonly throughout the year. Estes (2017) calls animals humans and the enemy of other humans (animals) in *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes*:

Moreover, the animals refers to the human who kills it as 'enemy' and uses the terms 'besnybede' and 'binom' both words capable of referring to robbery, an act of human being against another human (or human institution): It is unusual outside of deep ecological context to think of it as possible to steal from nature. (p. 126)

For Heide, rearing animals with a consumerist purpose and killing them is similar to committing robbery. It can act of disturbing and destroying the part of deep ecological existence of the beings. She puts both humans and animals in the same category to infer the symbiotic relations and opposing animal killing. The presence of mind in animals like in human beings may exist in different forms and conditions. Accordingly, it functions with its functioning mechanism. The cognitive power and sensory drives may work in a typical way.

But it does not mean that animals do not have the sensory perceptions to form knowledge and to play the mind, though human distinctness is defined with this logic, too. Carruthers (2013), in the *American Philosophical Quarterly*, opines:

It is impossible to teach a rat to respond to visual or auditory cues when searching for food, while it is easy to teach a rat to respond an olfactory cue. Pigeons, in contrast, can swiftly learn to utilize visual cues such as color when foraging, but cannot be taught to respond to odors or sounds. When a pigeon's goal is to avoid a shock, in contrast, it can easily learn to respond to auditory cues as can rat in the same circumstances. (p. 236)

The variances in internalizing, judging, and acting methods of animal species do not bring differences in their goals. The common goal of searching for food can be met by smelling, seeing, touching, or tasting by humans and animals. Therefore, Carruthers' (2013) example suggests a commonality in uniqueness.

Despite meeting the basic criterion of serving and feeding humans, they have to meet other standards of the human world. A goat and the pig may occupy the same value in feeding meat but the pig is degraded on the aesthetic base of humans. In "Learning from Animals: Natural History for Children", Ritvo (1985) writes: ". . . The pig for example, despite its incontestable value as food animal-ample recompense . . . For care and expenses bestowed on him was routinely castigated as stupid, filthy as sordid seeming to delight in what is most offensive to other animals (p. 4)." Ritivo underlines the devalued status of the pig among domestic animals. Except for supplying meat, it is expected to be beautiful to supply a sense of beauty to humans. Since it cannot meet that standard, the pig is kept in the dirty barns.

One of the landmarks of children's literature is the use of animal characters as in *Charlotte's Web*. Domestic animals and their roles in children's fiction cross the boundaries between man and beast in the way it began to be used just as an adjective to refer to human actions or functions in an animalistic fashion. The early desire and features of humans in the child phase want to hypothesize a bond between child and animals. This desire for a bond can be explored even in *Charlotte's Web* in the words of Jaeger (2018):

E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) struggles to view the farm animals simply as animals. Instead, most analyses of the text retain the practice of seeing the animal body as stand in for human values, emotions and experiences. Animals in children's literature offer the experience to wander back into the uncannily familiar bond we have with nature, whether it be through depiction of animal experiences or animal symbolism. (p. 17)

She explores that the children's sentiments and experiences align with the nature of the domestic animals. Their likings towards each other merge into symbiosis. The symbiotic feelings in the children give birth to similar attitudes in the animals towards them.

Despite of disapproval of inter-species intimacy by the anthropocentric discourses, the post-humanist currents in the relation are including the animals in friendship. It has led to the emergence of hybrid families by mixing up distant species and decentering the primacy of



humans. In "The Animal Challenge to Sociology," critics, Carter and Charles (2016) put forward their views: "We are witnessing the emergence of hybrid families or post-humanist households where humans are de-centered and the species barrier has no meaning (p. 93)." Their deconstructive idea about human-animal relation as superior or inferior resounds in the above statement. It carries an egalitarian outlook. They mean to say that the conventional relationship of self (human) and other (animal) should be erased. It should be replaced with the interchangeable roles and positions of both of the species.

Pets provide humans with more stability and a sense of close relation than the humans themselves. In some cases, a human may find peace and comfort from the animals, especially from domestic animals and pets. They are experienced as a source of emotional support and comfort. The recognition of the affectionate relation between human animals can have some therapeutic value. About the affective relationship critic Walsh (2009) in *Family Process* says: "The affective relationship between human and animals neither exist in isolation from other forms of animal-human relations nor are they new phenomenon... and the positive impact of close emotional bonds between people and their pet has been recognized (pp. 481-99)." Walsh (2009) tries to relate the human-animal relation with the convention. Except the utilitarian or consumerist purposes, animals are kept for some mental recreation and to provide mental peace. This trend of animal keeping has also been recognized gradually. Its therapeutic importance to soothe the human mind, and to provide inner calm by developing emotional linkage can be taken into consideration when Dr. Dorian in the text says: "Well, I do not think you have anything to worry about. Let Fern associate with her friends in the barn if she wants to. I would say, offhand, that spider and pigs were fully as interesting as Henry Fussy (p. 111)." Dr. Dorian's suggestion, upon Arable's visit, about Fern's abnormal intimacy with the pig, means that she does not have any psychological problems.

The shared feelings of security and insecurity, death, and harm among the humans and animals also put them into the single ground. Like human beings, the nonhuman species envision a dark and bright future. They also can think about death, they are also afraid of losing their lives and missing their parents or children. Coetzee (1999) theorizes the idea in *The Lives of Animals*: "You say that death does not matter to animals because the animal does not understand death...can we say that the veal calf misses its mother? Does the veal calf have enough of a grasp of the significance of mother relations? Does the veal calf have the meaning of maternal absence? (pp. 65-66)." Coetzee's metaphorical questions address the issue that like humans all domestic and wild animals have a fear of losing their kiths and kin. They are concerned about their separation from them. Like the calf, a four-footed domesticated animal, every insect gets touched by such cases which can be proved by Charlotte's postpartum condition below: "I just do not have much pep anymore. I guess I feel sad because I will not ever see my children... I have a feeling I am not going to see the results of last night's efforts. I do not feel good at all. I think I am languishing . . . it means I am slowing up, feeling my age. I am not young anymore (p. 54)." Charlotte's laying eggs results in her sickness which puts her near to death. In such a situation, she is overwhelmed by the possible loss and separation with offspring yet to be hatched. She feels insecure about her death and the death of the children. As a mother, she is overpowered by motherly

attachment to the eggs. Thinking of age is the conscious attribute that enables her to envision the coming death.

At the end of the narrative, the humanistic attributes of love, reciprocity, and a sense of responsibility and friendship have been re-justified in *Charlotte's Web*. To put humans in the upper ranking of the species, the feelings of these things are supposed vital which makes humans especially possessed beings more than others. But, as some critics say, it is not only the human preserve to boast of these qualities. Animals, like Wilbur and Charlotte, also can be models of friendship and loyalty. Critic Erisman (1998) in his “Emersonian echoes in E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*” writes:

Whatever else it may be *Charlotte's Web* is emphatically a chronicle of love and friendship. White himself concedes as much remarking in a 1973 letter that it is a story of friendship, life, death, and salvation. ...Wilbur, who at the book end pledges his friendship to Charlotte's children and grandchildren out of devotion to her brilliance beauty, and loyalty (p. 282).

Erisman (1998) posits the human-like features of animals by interpreting them with humanistic features. He brings love and friendship into consideration while defining the relations between animals. They, like humans, feel an ethical obligation to strengthen their relations with the community members.

### **Conclusion: A Symbiotic Relationship**

This research concludes that there are biological and perceptual similarities—tangible and intangible, visible and invisible—between humans and animals, making the boundary between the two species neither scientific nor justifiable. Animals possess sensory perceptions such as touch, hearing, taste, vision, and smell, akin to humans, despite physical differences. On this basis, humans and animals exist in mutual interdependence, forming a symbiotic relationship founded on equality, justice, and coexistence.

E.B. White's works highlight the need for harmony between humans and animals, as animals play equally significant roles alongside human characters in his novels. They challenge human centrality through their cognitive, behavioral, and practical capabilities. Traits often deemed unique to humans—such as love, anger, rationality, empathy, and pain—are also inherently present in animals. The unity and integration of the human and animal communities are essential for the smooth functioning of life and the promotion of equality and justice. Human-driven "othering" has caused separation and disintegration from the animal world. For a sustainable future, every entity in the Earth's community must embrace respect and reciprocity toward fellow creatures. Recognizing this interconnectedness has the potential to foster symbiosis, leading to ecospheric egalitarianism.

This analysis of *Charlotte's Web* (1952) reveals how human culture, dominated by anthropocentric and materialistic ideologies, overlooks the deep connection between humans and animals. In the current era, humanity's pursuit of a safe and sustainable existence—through science, technology, academic initiatives, and political agendas—will remain ineffective unless it incorporates principles of equality, justice, and animal rights into its core values.

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